OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

ISSUE 63 £4.99 NOW Gamer.com

IMAGINE PUBLISHING

retro GAMER™

AMSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA | NINTENDO | ATARI | SINCLAIR | NEO-GEO | SONY | COIN-OP | MOBILE

BIG EXCLUSIVE
MANIC MINER
REVEALING THE SECRET LEVELS YOU NEVER PLAYED



POCKET POWER!

From green screen to dual screen: Nintendo's portable history revealed



Game Boy (1989)



DSi (2009)

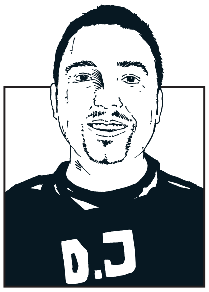
RETRO GAMER*

LOAD 63


It's a jungle out there.
Swing through it
iPhone Games Directory
Your unmissable guide to iPad, iPhone and iPod games
iPhone App Directory
Your guide to the best applications for iPhone & iPod touch
New for 2011
947
iPad 2 App Directory
859
iPad
Printed full colour large format book
Kindle
Directory™
The definitive review listings for iPad, iPhone and Android apps
Also in this series
Bookazines
eBooks • Apps
www.imaginebookshop.co.uk
HIGH ST.
BUY IN STORE
High street
amazon
Kindle Store
ip
ImagineShop.co.uk
App Store

THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE HANDHELD?



DARRAN JONES

It's not the best by any means, but I still have a deep unhealthy love for the Atari Lynx and pick up new games whenever I can.
Expertise: Juggling a wife, two children and Retro Gamer
Currently playing: *Killzone 2*
Favourite game of all time:
Robotron: 2084



ASHLEY DAY

It's not very 'retro', but I have to go with the DS. It's not just my favourite handheld but my favourite games machine ever. The unique features reignited my fascination with games.
Expertise: The games of Team 17, MSX, Sega's *Shining Force* series
Currently playing:
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars
Favourite game of all time:
Shining Force III



STUART HUNT

For me it has to be the Game Gear. Sure it was chunky, and it only gave me four hours' worth of playtime, but it was from Sega and it had a cracking *Shinobi* game on it too.
Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them
Currently playing:
The King Of Fighters Collection
Favourite game of all time:
The King Of Fighters Collection



CRAIG GRANNELL

A few months back, I'd have said the DS, without question. However, the range of innovative titles (including many retro-oriented ones) on the iPhone means it's won my gaming heart.
Expertise:
Games you don't need 37 fingers to control
Currently playing:
Eliss on iPhone
Favourite game of all time:
H.E.R.O.



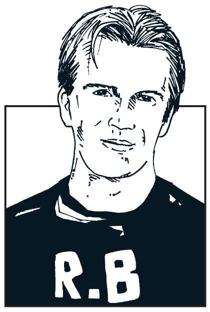
PAUL DRURY

Sensible answer: the original Game Boy for the hundreds of hours spent nurturing Pokémon. Nostalgic answer: Microvision because you never forget your first love.
Expertise: Beards and *One For The Ladies*
Currently playing:
Frankie Goes To Hollywood
Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



DAVID CROOKES

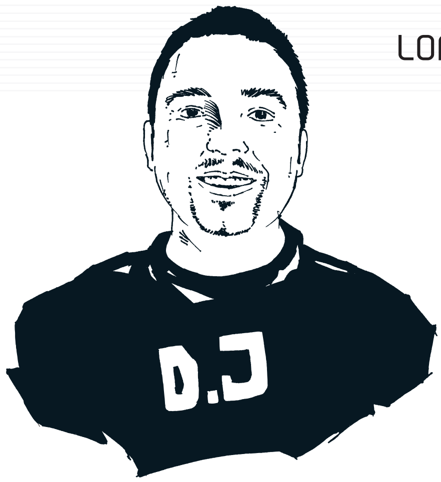
With the ability to play homebrew games and emulators and indulge in lots of commercial retro goodness, the Nintendo DS is my top choice.
Expertise: All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, Atari Lynx and PlayStation
Currently playing:
Lots of stuff. My exhibition, Videogame Nation, is coming to Manchester, you know
Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword



RICHARD BURTON

I love my old GamePark GP32 BLU. To be able to play *Sonic*, *Mario* or *Parodius* whilst waiting for Mrs B to finish shopping in Monsoon's pants department is truly invaluable.
Expertise: Stuff, nonsense, things and stuff
Currently playing:
Stunt Race FX
Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner

LOADING...



So then you've no doubt noticed that there's a brand new spanking console on the front cover sharing space with the Game Boy right? Worry not, this isn't Retro Gamer selling out; we're simply illustrating how one particular company's range of portable systems has pretty much come full circle now.

Take the Game Boy for example. Before Gunpei Yokoi came up with its design, the thought of a 'proper' handheld console – the Microvision lacked variety with its games – seemed like an utterly foreign concept to most gamers. Amazingly though, Nintendo's Game Boy and Atari's Lynx launched within months of each other - sparking off a handheld war that's raged ever since. A war that's seen Nintendo always coming out on top.

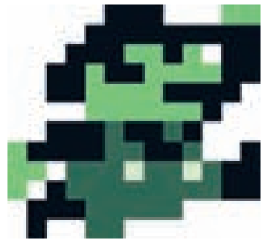
All the movers and shakers that made up the handheld war can be found over on page 20 and while some may scoff at the inclusion of both the DS and PSP there, it's important to note that you can't really appreciate either the past of the future until you take a look at the entire picture. Oh, and those annoyed with the lack of GamePark's presence within the feature, worry not: it's going to have an article all of its own very, very soon.

Enjoy the magazine





CONTENTS



» **Load 63** Breathing new life into classic games

FEATURED

28 Why You Must Play – Rygar
We argue why you must experience Tecmo's hardcore platformer

30 Cheap As Chips – Alex Kidd In Shinobi World
Sega's old mascot takes some lessons from Joe Musashi

36 Making Of – Joust
Find out what happens when you cross knights with flying ostriches

48 Perfect 10 – Game Boy
If you own Nintendo's first portable console then you need these games

50 And The Rest – Game Boy
A gallery of green-screen delights

54 Making Of – Night Trap
The true story behind one of gaming's most controversial titles

64 Making Of – Bounty Bob Strikes Back
Bill Hogue recalls the genesis of Bounty Bob's popular sequel

78 Making Of – Stardust
The origins of the cult Amiga blaster



20 HISTORY IN YOUR HANDS
Retro Gamer charts the humble origins and current progress of handheld gaming

RETRO REVIVALS

52 Strider II
No not the solid Capcom offering but the lousy Tiertex edition.

86 Ghost Hunters
A game that will have you conjuring up more new swear words than any other.

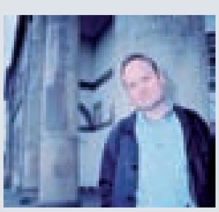


42 GAME BOY
Your in-depth guide to Nintendo's most successful handheld

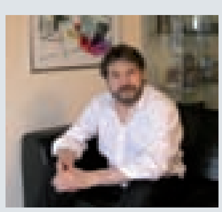
32 MANIC MINER
Stuart Campbell reveals the secret levels that you've never played



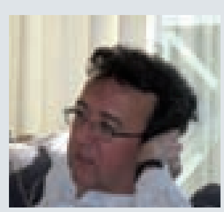
This month we've been chatting to…



58 CHARLES CECIL
The co-founder of Revolution Software discusses the founding of Europe's best point-and-click studio and how the Wii and DS are revitalising the genre.



70 ARCHER MACLEAN
One-time Retro Gamer columnist takes time out of his busy schedule to discuss his successes in the industry and his brand new game.



80 KEVIN TOMS
The beard's long gone, but Kevin Toms remains a firm fan of the footy management sim. Find out what he's been up to since leaving the *Football Manager* franchise.

eShop



You can now order **Retro Gamer** and any of your other favourite Imagine titles from our online shop. Don't delay, make sure you get your order today.

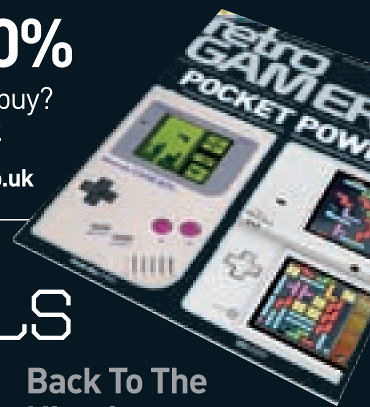
Head over to **www.imagineshop.co.uk**

subscribe here!

AND SAVE 30%

Split over what magazine to buy? Then pick up a **Retro Gamer**.

Subscribe at **www.imaginesubs.co.uk**



> " A lot more to the game than just learning " Stuart Hunt



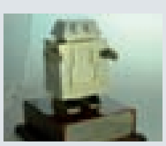
68 THE CLASSIC GAME

Stuart Hunt goes back to skool in order to play a Speccy classic

58 REVOLUTION SOFTWARE

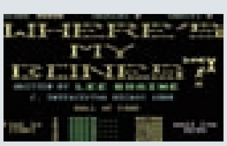
How the popular 16-bit studio is enjoying a healthy revival

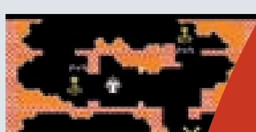




18 WHERE'S MY BONES?

Rare's Wil Overton takes a fond look back at one of his favourite games. Ten points if you've actually heard of it...





retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL

ESSENTIALS

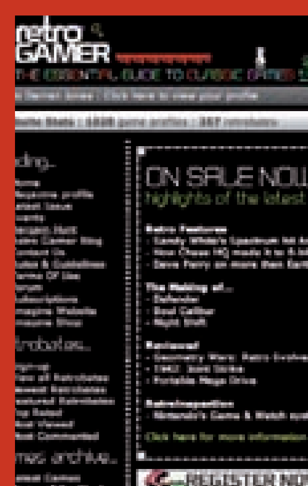
6 RetroRadar
10 Diary
12 Buyer's Guide
13 Collector's Corner
14 Back To The Eighties
16 Back To The Nineties
98 Homebrew
102 Subscriptions
104 Letters
108 Next Month
109 Directory
114 End/Game

RETRO RATED

88 Resident Evil 5
89 Sonic And The Dark Knight
89 Retro Game Challenge
89 Winter Games
89 Exit 2
90 The King Of Fighters Collection: The Orochi Saga
90 Söldner-X Himmelsstürmer
91 Wonderboy In Monster Land
91 GTI Club+
91 Death Tank
91 Lumines Supernova
91 Clay Fighter
92 Chrono Trigger
94 Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars
96 iDracula
96 Euro Fighter
96 Rogue Touch
97 PuzzleQuest
97 Metal Gear Solid Touch

Get online now!

Visit the **Retro Gamer** website and upload your very own classic profiles



www.retrogamer.net

» GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD

RETRORADAR





» [Xbox Live] It may have focused a little too much on the collection side of things, but *Banjo Tooie* was still a superb N64 release. We're looking forward to this new update.



BANJO'S BACK

THE POPULAR BEAR RETURNS TO LIVE ARCADE, KAZOOIE IN TOW

Considering how many classic games Rare is currently sitting on, few of them have yet to make the leap to Xbox Live Arcade. Still, the two titles that have arrived – *Jetpac Refuelled* and *Banjo Kazooie* – have been of an incredibly high standard and Rare's third offering, *Banjo Tooie*, is due to arrive very, very soon.

After enjoying Banjo's first outing so much, we decided to speak to Rog Carpenter, the executive product manager for both *Banjo Kazooie* and *Tooie*.

Retro Gamer: So how's the sequel shaping up?
Rog Carpenter: *Banjo Tooie* is actually shaping up really well. In fact, we're in the final home stretch of development now and I think the entire team is really happy with the end result.

RG: Has it been an easier ride this time around?
RC: Well, we all learnt a lot while working on *Banjo Kazooie*, especially in terms of what's needed to bring a classic game to another platform. So *Banjo Tooie* has had far more attention lavished on it as a result. It's still very much a faithful port, but the enhancements that we have created certainly add to the game experience. We hope that fans and those new to the game will get a lot of fun out of it once it's available for download.

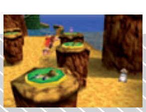
RG: We understand some of those enhancements include Stop 'N' Swop?
RC: Stop 'N' Swop is certainly the number one press enquiry at the moment. The mechanic is a simple version of what would have been – as close as can be done with no cartridge to play with anyway. The seven SNS items a player collects in *Banjo Kazooie* will show up in *Banjo Tooie*, then the player can do 'stuff' with them… It's all quite straightforward. Some of it is new to *Tooie* and some of it will be familiar; we hope the fans will appreciate the work that has been put into it.

RG: So how easy was it porting *Banjo Tooie* to Xbox Live Arcade? Any problems?
RC: Whilst porting an old game to a new platform is fairly straightforward, it can be a long and painstaking process. Each bit of N64-specific code had to be temporarily removed in turn until the game could be built to run on an Xbox 360 – unfortunately you still couldn't see, hear or interact with anything at that point! From there each low-level routine to handle rendering the graphics, playing the sounds and music, and interpreting the controller input had to be replaced with Xbox 360 code. Fortunately, a lot of the work that was done to port the first *Banjo Kazooie* game could be reused when it came to *Tooie,* but then the second game is significantly bigger and contained an awful lot more code.

As for problems, yeah there have been one or two interesting moments which could be described as 'problems' – but like any game development, that's what keeps it entertaining

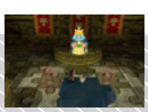
RG: So what about Live-specific stuff?
RC: Well, both Microsoft Game Studios and ourselves were very keen that any new features would be added in a way that was as sympathetic as possible to the original games, which meant additional work to wrangle the ten-year-old code-base into displaying all the extra menus and options. Whilst we had our fingers deep in the code, it was an ideal opportunity to fix one or two old issues at Rare's request to improve the overall playability of the games.

Banjo Timeline



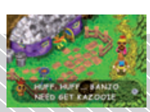
BANJO KAZOOIE
Year Released: 1998
Version: N64

→



BANJO TOOIE
Year Released: 2000
Version: N64

→



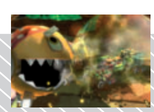
BANJO KAZOOIE: GRUNTY'S REVENGE
Year Released: 2003
Version: GBA

→



BANJO PILOT
Year Released: 2005
Version: GBA

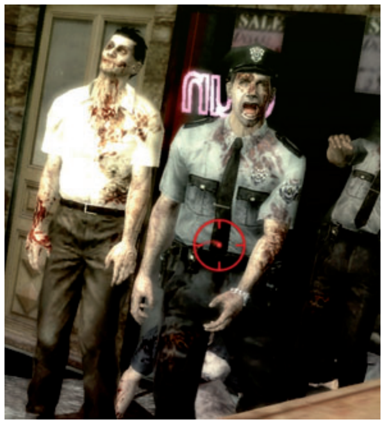
→



BANJO KAZOOIE: NUTS & BOLTS
Year Released: 2008
Version: Xbox 360

RESI-RECTION







» [Wii] The lack of new additions is lazy, but this is nevertheless a great game, especially with the original GameCube release now climbing in price.

MORE RESIDENT EVIL HIJINKS HEADING TO THE WII

If there was one complaint we had about the excellent *Umbrella Chronicles*, it was that it simply didn't tell you the whole *Resident Evil* back story. Luckily, Capcom had a sequel planned all along, meaning that we'll now get to find out everything that happened to Leon Kennedy and Claire Redfield.

Whereas *The Umbrella Chronicles* covered *Resident Evil Zero*, *Resident Evil* and *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis*, its sequel *Darkside Chronicles* will highlight the events of *Resident Evil 2*, *Code Veronica* and *Resident Evil 4*, something we're especially excited about as Leon Kennedy is the Retro Gamer team's favourite character. Little is known about what new gameplay modes will be available, but Capcom has revealed a new evade system that should hopefully make the sequel a little easier to play.

If that's not enough *Resident Evil* news for you for one month, you may be interested to hear that Capcom will also be releasing its Wii versions of Resident Evil and Resident Evil Zero later on in the year as well. Before you get too excited, it's worth noting that these aren't new versions in the style of Nintendo's Play It range or Capcom's very own *Resident Evil 4 Wii Edition*, but straightforward ports, which does seem a little strange.

Still, considering that both games weren't exactly massive sellers on the GameCube, the larger Wii user base should at least ensure that more gamers will finally be able to appreciate them.

BEST OF THE CUBE More GameCube remakes we'd like to see



F-ZERO GX

This was absolutely awesome on the GameCube and we're sure it wouldn't be too hard for Nintendo to rejig the controls *Mario Kart* style. Improvements we'd like to see would be a new online mode, additional tracks and unlockable characters/ships in the style of *Super Smash Bros Brawl*. Come on Nintendo, you know it makes perfect sense.



VIEWTIFUL JOE

The release of *Viewtiful Joe* proved that it was perfectly possible to still create a brilliant 2D fighter, so it would be nice to revisit it on the Wii. Maybe Capcom could release a special edition of the game that featured the original along with its sequel, and use the Wii's motion controls to create some funky new VX moves. We'd certainly buy it.



ZELDA: THE FOUR SWORDS

Everyone loved *The Wind Waker* and *Twilight Princess*, but if we're honest this was our favourite *Zelda* game on the GameCube. The previous GBA link-up would work even better with the wireless DS, while the Wii's Remote speaker would add a little extra magic to the on-screen proceedings. Add some extra levels and new gameplay modes and we'd soon snap this up.

LAST-MINUTE NEWS



» [PC Engine] Hudson continues to torment us by not announcing a *Devil Crush* update.

ARMY MOVES

Fans of Hudson's *Military Madness* will no doubt be pleased to hear that it's currently being prepped for Xbox Live Arcade, Sony's PlayStation Network and Nintendo's WiiWare service. Although we've not seen any screenshots yet, Hudson is promising 3D graphics – well duh! – plenty of spanking new units to control, as well as a brand new online mode, meaning you'll be able to battle both friends and strangers alike. We were incredibly fond of the PC Engine original, which is currently available on the Virtual Console (download it if you've not played it), so we're going to be very interested to see what happens with Hudson's update. Of course, this still doesn't forgive them for the lack of a *Devil Crush* remake announcement, but it's better than nothing. Expect *Military Madness* to appear sometime during the summer.



GAME ON

MORE RETRO EVENTS HEADING YOUR WAY

Crikey, you wait ages for a decent retro event to come along – Retro Fusion we thank you – and then a whole load are announced at once. In fact, so many events are starting to pop up now that it's becoming a real issue to cover them all.

After another successful Retro Vision (see last issue for more details) event, organiser Mark Rayson has already revealed that next year's will run from 29-31 January. Even better, 5% of ticket sales (which are £20 for the weekend) will go directly to the Richard Joseph cancer charity fund that was set up by Jon Hare in memory of the late great game (and TV) music creator.

If you can't wait until next year then why not sign up to the next RCM meet on May 31? The Retro Computer Museum's location is in Swannington Leicestershire and they also accept donations of old computers so that they

» Paul Drury recently revealed that Retro Vision was a right laugh, so you'd be crazy to miss next year's effort.

can be preserved and put proudly on display in the museum. If arcade machines are more your style then you may want to sign up for the Arcade Barn Meet, which will be taking place in Devon on the 13th of June. Hurry though as places are extremely limited.

If you're hungering for more gaming action and enjoy both new and old titles then the Insert Coin 2009 might be more up your street. Taking place in Northampton from 18-19 July, it promises plenty of dedicated cabs such as *R-Type Leo* and *Street Fighter IV*.

Last but by no means least is Retro Reunited, which runs from 12-13 September at the Cedar Court Hotel in Huddersfield. Proceeds will be going to the homelessness charity Shelter, so you can enjoy your weekend knowing that it will all be going to a good cause.

We've even heard rumblings that Retro Fusion could be happening this year as well, possibly around September time, so as soon as we have more concrete news (hopefully next issue) we'll be able to tell you all about it. Basically if you love your old games and enjoy meeting up with like-minded individuals then 2009 is going to be a fantastic year for you.

HERO OF THE MONTH



LUIGI

HERO OF THE MONTH
Every month, **Retro Gamer** looks back at a classic videogame hero or heroine. This month it's the turn of Luigi

First appearance: *Mario Bros*

Weapon of choice: Patented bottom bounce

Most likely to: Wear a natty green outfit

Least likely to: Say, "It's a me, Mario"

Unusual fact: Luigi looked and acted identically to Mario until the release of *Super Mario Bros: The Lost Levels*

INDY RETURNS

THE MAN WITH THE HAT IS BACK

As you'll know if you've had the pleasure of playing it, *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis* is easily one of the best point-and-click adventures of all time. So imagine how delighted we were to discover that it's going to be making a new appearance on Nintendo's Wii.

This isn't a brand new remake in the style of *Broken Sword*, however, but the original game – although considering its legacy, we have no problem at all with that particular revelation. Interestingly, rather than releasing the game on WiiWare (surely the perfect platform for past adventures from LucasArts?) it will instead be bundled exclusively with the incoming release of *Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings*.

This is obviously fantastic news, not just because a classic game is getting a re-airing, but also because it means that future LucasArts classics could be on the way as well. With Revolution's Charles Cecil hinting at revisiting *Beneath A Steel Sky*, the Wii could well be the saviour of one of our favourite genres.



» [Amiga] Get ready to be whipped up into a point-and-click frenzy by the return of *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis*.

Indy's return has had us salivating over other point-and-click classics. Stuart is praying fervently for a remake of *Day Of The Tentacle*, Darran's longing for a brand new *Monkey Island* adventure, while Steve got all confused and thought we were talking about dance moves.

retro GAMER DIARY

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO...

Just because **Retro Gamer** looks to the past doesn't mean there aren't plenty of games and events to look forward to in the future. Every month we list all the exciting games and events for you to add to your 'to do' list



APRIL

SAM & MAX: EPISODE 2

Released: 24 April

Publisher: Atari

Price: £29.99

Format: Wii

Although we didn't get around to reviewing *Episode One* of *Sam & Max*, we did manage to play it out of hours and were very pleased with the end results. *Season 2* is effectively a compilation of the PC episodes and has once again been tailor-made to make use of the Wii's unique control system. It's also gut-bustingly funny to boot, so expect a review in the next issue.



APRIL

NAMCO MUSEUM: VIRTUAL ARCADE

Released: 24 April

Publisher: Atari

Price: £34.99

Format: Xbox 360

Now this has the potential to be rather special. Atari and Namco's latest release will feature brand new Xbox Live Arcade games like the excellent *Pac-Man Championship Edition*, as well as past classics like *Metrocross*, *Super Pac-Man* and *Galaxian*. Needless to say, we'll be reviewing the hell out of this as soon as we get hold of it.



MAY

POKÉMON PLATINUM

Released: 22 May

Publisher: Nintendo

Price: £29.99

Format: NDS

Listen carefully. Can you hear it? That's the sound of Nintendo's biggest gaming juggernaut heading to the DS. Selling a ridiculous 1 million units during its first two days in Japan, *Platinum* follows on from *Diamond* and *Pearl* but includes plenty of new features and extras. Basically if you're a fan of Nintendo's Pocket Monsters then 22 May won't come quickly enough.



MAY

VIRTUA TENNIS 2009

Released: 29 May

Publisher: Sega

Price: £29.99 - £49.99

Format: Xbox 360, PS3, PC

Realising that *Virtua Tennis 4* would sound like the franchise was getting a little long in the tooth, Sega has done an EA and added '2009' to the end of its latest game. Sega has promised that many of the classic mini-games of old will be returning in this latest update, along with plenty of new ones. Let's just hope Sega isn't tempted to mess around with the series' sublime controls.



MAY

BIONIC COMMANDO

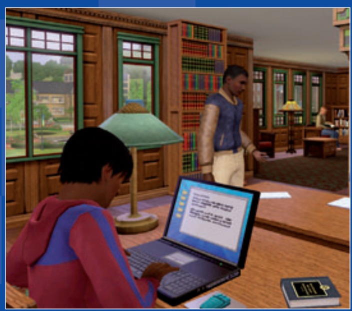
Released: 29 May

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £34.99 - £49.99

Format: Xbox 360, PS3, PC

Another title that's slipped until May. Normally this could mean the kiss of death, but we're wondering if this is a purposeful move by Capcom to move it away from both *Street Fighter IV* and *Resident Evil 5*. We've not heard rumblings of any difficulties on GRIN's part, so we're hoping that this is just a tactical move from Capcom to allow the game a chance to breathe. Expect a review very soon.



JUNE

THE SIMS 3

Released: 06 June

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Price: £34.99

Format: PC

Now nearly a decade old, *The Sims* is one of the most popular franchises of all time, with its sequel still proving incredibly popular some five years after its original release. EA promises that the next step for the series is far greater interaction, more in-depth personalities and far better synching with other lots thanks to its new neighbourhood exploration mode. Looks like we're going to get a chance to re-create the Retro Gamer offices again.



JUNE

WOLFENSTEIN

Released: 26 June

Publisher: Activision

Price: £34.99 - £49.99

Format: Xbox 360, PS3, PC

Depending on who you speak to, *Wolfenstein 3D* is widely responsible for kickstarting the genre now known as the first-person shooter. It also happened to be one of the best FPSs on the original Xbox that didn't have 'Halo' in its main title. Raven Software, Endrant Studios and Activision are all working closely to ensure that it captures the spirit of the original games, but can still forge a name for itself among heavy competition.



JUNE

RYGAR: THE BATTLE OF ARGUS

Released: 26 June

Publisher: Tecmo

Price: £29.99

Format: Wii

We're in two minds about *The Battle of Argus*. While we're obviously pleased that a classic retro hero is getting dusted down for a new generation of gamers, it's rather disappointing that this is just a port of the (admittedly fine) PS2 game. While the visuals don't appear to have had that much of an overhaul, Tecmo is promising that it's all about the new controls. We'll all find out soon enough.

BARGAIN HUNT

DESPERATE TO FINISH OFF YOUR RETRO COLLECTION? WANT TO GET YOUR HANDS ON ALL THE BEST BARGAINS BUT DON'T KNOW WHERE TO GO? THEN VISIT **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET/BARGAIN_HUNT.PHP** AND DISCOVER ALL THE CLASSIC MACHINES THAT YOU'LL EVER NEED

You've been asking for it forever, but we're pleased to announce a brand new look for **Retro Gamer**'s Buyer's Guide section that makes it incredibly easy to get your hands on all the best retro bargains.

Using our new search engine couldn't be easier, as all you need to do is select a manufacturer and machine from the pull-down menu. Once you've found the system you're after, the magic of the internet will search eBay for the top 20 ending items, meaning that you'll be able to gauge the market's health with very little effort. This month, Darran's continued his search for a decently priced *Alpine Games*.



Head on over to the excellent **www.retrogamer.net** and click on 'Bargain Hunt' or visit **www.retrogamer.net/bargain_hunt.php**



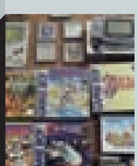
Put in the details for the greatest computer in the world and discuss with your staff writer why it's so much better than the ZX Spectrum.



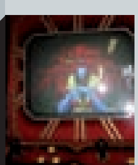
Swoon in delight as you find yourself getting ever closer to collecting all the £1.99 *Simulator* games that Codemasters ever released.

EBAY BARGAINS

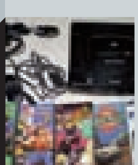
Retro Gamer has been scouring the world's most popular auction site, to find the best bargains out there…



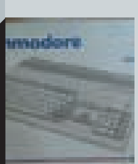
■ This nice little Game Boy lot, which included a GBA, original Game Boy and 68 Game Boy games was going at just £10.50 with hours left on the clock.



■ With under an hour left this arcade cab with *Samurai Shodown 3: Makusa's Revenge* had found no takers. At £99, and in mint condition, we don't know why.



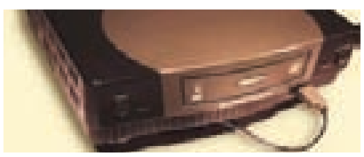
■ This Sega Saturn, seemingly in great working order, came with three games, including *Sega Rally* and *Virtua Fighter 2*, and was going for £5.



■ This little lot is our bargain of the month. A boxed Amiga 500 with over 500 games going for a ridiculous £8. That's just mental, that is.

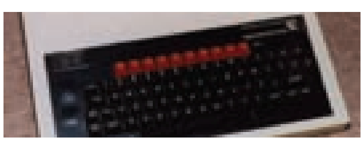
3DO

3DO GOLDSTAR	£45+ ($81+)
PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)	£40+ ($74+)
PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)	£20+ ($37+)



ACORN

ARCHIMEDES	£30 ($55)
ATOM	£50 ($92)
ELECTRON	£10 ($18)
BBC MICRO	£15 ($28)



AMSTRAD

CPC 464	£10+ ($18+)
CPC 664	£90+ ($165+)
CPC 6128	£25+ ($46+)
GX4000	£50+ ($92+)

APPLE

APPLE II	£30+ ($55+)

ATARI

400/800/600XL/XE	£20+ ($37+)
2600 (VCS)	£20+ ($37+)
5200	£30 ($55)
7800	£20+ ($37+)
JAGUAR	£20+ ($37+)
JAGUAR CD	£70 ($129)
LYNX I/II	£20+ ($37+)
ST	£20+ ($37+)

BANDAI

GUNDAM RX-78	£75+ ($138+)
PLAYDIA	£90 ($166)
PIPPIN (ATMARK)	£500+ ($921+)
WONDERSWAN	£10 ($18)
WONDERSWAN COLOR	£20 ($37)
WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL	£25 ($46)



COMMODORE

AMIGA 500/600/1200	£20+ ($37+)
C16/PLUS/4	£15+ ($28+)
C64	£10+ ($18+)
C64 GS	£30+ ($55+)
C128	£30+ ($55+)
CDTV	£20 ($37)
CD32	£25 ($46)
VIC-20	£10+ ($18+)



FUJITSU

FUJITSU FM	£100+ ($184+)
FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY	£200+ ($368+)



MISCELLANEOUS

BALLY ASTROCADE	£20 ($37)
BARCODE BATTLER	£5 ($18)
CASIO LOOPY	£25 ($46)
FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F	£10 ($18)
COLECOVISION	£30 ($55)
DRAGON 32/64	£8 ($15)
ARCADIA 2001	£10 ($18)
EPOCH CASSETTE VISION	£20 ($37)
EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION	£30 ($55)
INTELLIVISION	£40+ ($74+)
ODYSSEY	£10 ($18)
ORIC-1	£20 ($37)
PLAYSTATION	£10 ($18)
SAM COUPÉ	£50-£200 ($92-$368)
SUPERVISION	£15 ($28)
TIGER ELEC GAME.COM	£15 ($28)
TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)	£10 ($18)
VECTREX (MB/GCE)	£80 ($147)
X68000	£90+ ($166+)

MSX

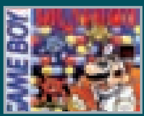
MSX 1	£10+ ($18+)
MSX 2	£20+ ($37+)
MSX 2+	£30+ ($55+)
MSX TURBO R	£30+ ($55+)

NEC

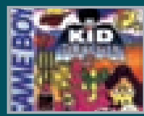
PC-6###	£10+ ($18+)

RETRO AUCTION WATCH

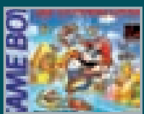
Retro Gamer sifts through the pages of eBay to report back on any items of interest, hardware or software, that caught our eyes. This month, we've been seeking out some Game Boy games



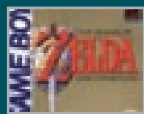
DR. MARIO
System: **Game Boy**
Normally sells for **£4**
Ended at **£No Sale**



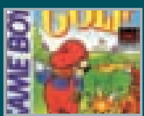
KID DRACULA
System: **Game Boy**
Normally sells for **£8**
Ended at **£12**



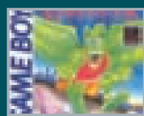
SUPER MARIO LAND
System: **Game Boy**
Normally sells for **£6**
Ended at **£14.98**



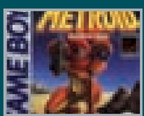
LEGEND OF ZELDA: LINK'S AWAKENING
System: **Game Boy**
Normally sells for **£10**
Ended at **£4.50**



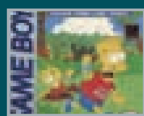
GOLF
System: **Game Boy**
Normally sells for **£5**
Ended at **£11.67**



GARGOYLE'S QUEST
System: **Game Boy**
Normally sells for **£4**
Ended at **£8.40**



METROID II
System: **Game Boy**
Normally sells for **£5**
Ended at **£8**



BART'S ESCAPE FROM CAMP DEADLY
System: **Game Boy**
Normally sells for **£4**
Ended at **£6.80**

PC-8801	**£20 ($37)**
PC-9801	**£35 ($65)**
PC-FX	**£50 ($92)**
PC-ENGINE	**£55 ($101)**
PC-ENGINE GT	**£70+ ($129+)**
TURBOGRAFX-16	**£30 ($55)**
TURBO EXPRESS	**£50 ($92)**
SUPERGRAFX	**£80 ($147)**
PC-E CD-ROM/ TURBOGRAFX CD	**£50+ ($92+)**
PC-E DUO/ TURBO DUO	**£120 ($221)**
DUO-R	**£80 ($147)**

NINTENDO

FAMICOM	**£60 ($111)**
FAMICOM AV	**£40 ($74)**
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM	**£70 ($129)**
SHARP FAMICOM TWIN	**£100 ($184)**
GAME & WATCH	**£1+ ($2+)**
GAME BOY B/W	**£5 ($9)**
GAME BOY POCKET	**£8 ($15)**
GAME BOY COLOR	**£12 ($22)**
GAME BOY ADVANCE	**£25 ($46)**
N64	**£10 ($18)**
N64 DD	**£150+ ($276+)**
NES (TOASTER)	**£15 ($28)**
NES (DOG BONE)	**£50 ($92)**
SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)	**£20 ($37)**
SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JAPAN)	**£50+ ($92+)**
VIRTUAL BOY	**£80 ($147)**



PHILIPS

CD-I	**£20+ ($37+)**
CD-I 450/500	**£30 ($55)**
VIDEOPAC G7000	**£10 ($18)**
VIDEOPAC G7400	**£20 ($37)**

SEGA

32X	**£35 ($65)**
DREAMCAST	**£25 ($46)**
GAME GEAR	**£15 ($28)**
SG-1000	**£50-£150 ($80-$260)**
SC-3000	**£50 ($92)**
MASTER SYSTEM I/II	**£10 ($18)**



AMSTRAD MEGA PC	**£10 ($18)**
TERADRIVE	**£100 ($184)**
MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II	**£25 ($46)**
GENESIS 3	**£35 ($65)**
NOMAD	**£100 ($184)**
MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/ CDX/X'EYE	**£100+ ($184+)**
MEGA-CD (SCD) I/II	**£50+ ($92+)**
PICO	**£20 ($37)**
SATURN	**£30 ($55)**
MEGA CD (SCD) I/II	**£50+ ($92+)**

SINCLAIR

ZX80	**£200 ($368)**
ZX81	**£70 ($129)**
ZX SPECTRUM 48K	**£10 ($18)**
ZX SPECTRUM 128K	**£40 ($74)**
ZX SPECTRUM+	**£35 ($65)**
ZX SPECTRUM +2	**£35 ($65)**
ZX SPECTRUM +3	**£40 ($74)**

SNK

NEO-GEO AES	**£150+ ($276+)**
NEO-GEO MVS	**£70 ($129)**
NEO-GEO CD	**£100 ($184)**
NEO-GEO CDZ	**£80+ ($147+)**
NEO-GEO POCKET	**£20 ($37)**
NEO-GEO POCKET COLOR	**£35 ($65)**

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

THIS ISSUE WE SPEAK TO AUSSIE MIX-MASTER **TYSON HOPPRICH** WHO USES HIS COLLECTION TO PRODUCE ELECTRONIC DANCE MUSIC. VISIT HIS WEBSITE HTTP://DJTRIP.FINDER.NET.AU/



» My name is Tyson Hopprich (aka DJTR!P); I use and collect vintage computers and consoles for my music compositions.



» *Resident Evil 4* chainsaw, 8-bit / game soundtracks, SNK drama CD with comic, Mario Energy drink & a signed copy of *Atari Classics Evolved* by Al Alcorn from the 'Game On' Exhibition.



» A signed block mount from the world premiere at MoMA of Marcin Ramocki's (USA) documentary *8-BIT* from the 'Game On' Exhibition.



» My pride and joy: a Neo Geo MVS with 27 games and an original *Space Invaders* cocktail cabinet… *Metal Slug* is Hot.



» My collection is based around me physically finding each object. My rule is no eBay: I enjoy the hunt and the stories which go with each score.



If you have a collection that you feel the rest of the **Retro Gamer** readership needs to know about, then contact us at **retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk** and we'll do our best to get you in the magazine.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES



THE LATEST NEWS FROM FEBRUARY 1987



» Commodore's new Amiga cost a staggering £599 in the UK, which was nowhere near the USA's $599 pricepoint.



» [Amstrad CPC] *Ballbreaker*: *Breakout* with the added spice of 3D… and weapons… and with computer lag.



» [Amiga] *Ninja Mission*: The actual game was nothing special, but just look at that amazing cover. Why would you not buy that?

FEBRUARY 1987 – Amiga 500 unveiled, Mastertronic buys Australian, CRL breaks its balls, Ocean plays with the plumber and Gremlin babysits Jack, a gun-toting ball and the second coming of a bouncy Thing. Richard Burton checks his thing on a spring and finds it well oiled…

Excitingly, the first pictures of Commodore's new Amiga 500 home computer found their way into the computing press.

Commodore hoped its new machine would take on the might of Atari's 520ST systems which had become established in both the UK and USA. Commodore anticipated the Amiga to be launched in the USA in April with the UK following shortly afterwards. Disappointingly, UK consumers were once again being stiffed with the UK price set at £599 while Americans paid $599 for the same setup.

El cheapo software house, Mastertronic, had press releases flying around like confetti. The first of three press releases revealed the firm was due to enter the budget 16-bit software market with its new label, 16-Blitz. The first game available would be *Ninja Mission*, which would be out on the Atari ST and PC for a mere £9.95.

Mastertronic's gaming tentacles began reaching out beyond British shores with the creation of Arcadia Systems. This sub-division of the company would be based in the USA and would concentrate on developing new coin-op games.

Sadly, the development times for the few games that were being worked on had become so protracted that this expensive operation almost put the entire company out of business. Arcadia was quickly dropped with nothing of note being produced.

To complete the newsworthy threesome, the best was left to last. Melbourne House, famous for such games as *The Hobbit* and *Horace* titles, was bought from its holding company, Beam Software, for a reported figure of £1 million, although the actual figure was thought to be nearer half that sum.

Mastertronic was keen to enter the full-price software market and rather than set up its own new label, it pursued the idea of purchasing an existing well-known name. Beam Software was enduring money woes at that time and so a deal was struck which benefited both parties.

The Melbourne House name remained intact with new impending titles such as *Throne Of Fire* and *Judge Dredd*. The latter resulted in an unadulterated stinker of a game on both the C64 and Spectrum.

CRL announced its newest game would be like the age-old *Breakout* bat, ball and wall game. Granted, not really something that's going to get your trousers stirring. However, *Ballbreaker* would be isometric and feature missiles and monsters. It played well and looked pretty enough, but gauging the 3D effect and where the ball was in relation to your bat wasn't as smoothly executed as it could've been, making *Ballbreaker* overtly frustrating. It made its debut on the Amstrad CPC with a Spectrum version following later.

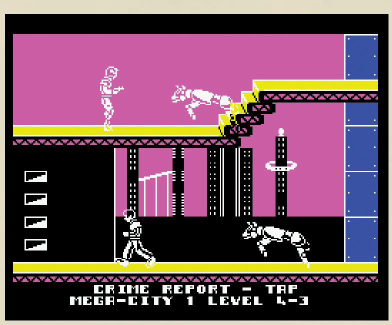
Ocean Software was proudly touting its current work-in-progress, a conversion of the classic arcade game, *Mario Bros*. The original wasn't terribly exciting but Ocean thought there was room in the market for another platform game. They were sadly mistaken. It was as drab and lifeless as a cowpat.

Furthermore, Atari had converted the same title three years earlier, also on the C64, and it was graphically superior and markedly more playable than Ocean's version, making it look even more contemptible.

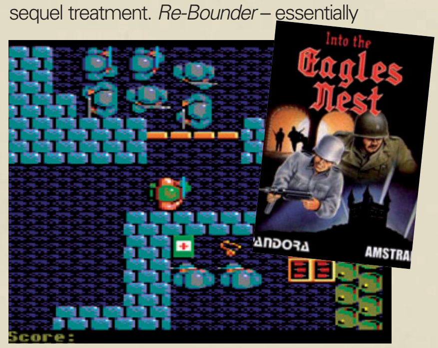
Gremlin Graphics, whilst developing the corking *Gauntlet* and later, its *Deeper Dungeons* for US Gold, found time to produce some very palatable offerings for its own label. *Bounder*, a tale of bouncy balls leading to joystick-throwing frustration, was getting the sequel treatment. *Re-Bounder* – essentially



» [ZX Spectrum] *Fairlight 2*: Bo Jangeborg's *Fairlight* sequel is more of the same. Great graphics but the wait between screens is torturous…



» [ZX Spectrum] *Judge Dredd*: Mastertronic bought Melbourne House and brought out this. More dreadful than Dredd.



» [Amstrad CPC] *Into The Eagles Nest*: Take on the Nazis in this WWII *Gauntlet*-style game that is atmospheric and enjoyable.

1987

FEBRUARY NEWS

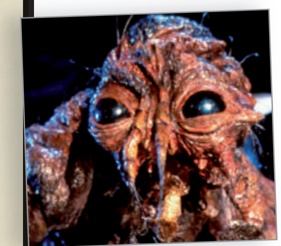
2 February and confirmation arrived that the Church Envoy to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Terry Waite, had been kidnapped by members of Islamic Jihad in Beirut, Lebanon, whilst attempting to negotiate the release of other Western hostages. The Islamic extremists stated they were holding Mr Waite as he had not helped to secure the release of 17 prisoners being held in Kuwait. He was eventually released on 18 November 1991.

More aggravation for the Church of England followed on 26 February with the news that the General Synod, the Church's parliament, had voted by a hefty majority to allow the ordination of women priests. The Church had been embroiled in long-running disagreements over this matter and it continued to threaten the organisation with talk of members defecting or even forming other churches. Although feelings ran high, the eventual result was unavoidable and the legislation to allow female ordination was passed in November 1992, albeit by just two votes.

It was a good month for UK movie-goers with two top-notch offerings premiering. First there was the remake of *The Fly* starring Jeff Goldblum as BrundleFly, and we were spoilt yet further with the magnificent *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. Are you Abe Froman, The Sausage King Of Chicago?



» Terry Waite – Church Envoy and all-round nice bloke – was finally released more than five years after being taken hostage.



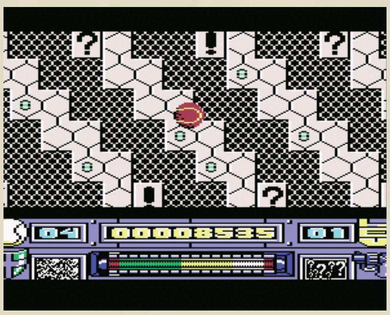
» If you happen to find this fly in your soup, maybe consider walking away and not looking back…



» [Commodore 64] *Mario Bros*: Ocean's attempted conversion was a right pig's ear. Atari's earlier C64 effort was miles better.

more of the same except your ball is now armoured and packing heat – was eventually released on the C64, and well received, with the Spectrum conversion strangely disappearing into the ether never to be seen. What a shame.

There was better news for Spectrum gamers with the sequel to *Thing On A Spring* almost ready to be released. Although the C64, CPC, Spectrum and MSX were getting versions of *Thing Bounces Back*, it was actually Thing's first outing on the latter two systems. Again, the game was warmly welcomed by all.



» [C64] *Re-Bounder*. Gremlin had a knack of producing games of a slightly bizarre nature. That is, of course, a good thing.

Completing Gremlin's triumphant trio was *Jack The Nipper II: In Coconut Capers* featuring the returning exploits of Wally Week's cute baby son. Gremlin once again weaved their magic and produced a very acceptable arcade adventure.

Computer & Video Games placed *Contact Sam Cruise* (Microsphere, Spectrum) as one of its two Games Of The Month, the other being the twin game compilation of *Uridium* and *Paradroid* (Hewson, C64).

C&VG Hit status was bestowed upon a further dozen; *Fairlight II* (The Edge, Spectrum), *Skate Rock* (Bubble Bus, C64), *Paperboy* (Elite, C64), *Championship Wrestling* (US Gold/Epyx, C64), *Five Star Games* (Beau Jolly, Spectrum, C64 & Amstrad), *Impossaball* (Hewson, Spectrum), *Katrap* (Streetwise, Spectrum), *Boulderdash Construction Kit* (Databyte, C64), *Destroyer* (US Gold/Epyx, C64), *Terra Cresta* (Imagine, C64), *Erebus* (Virgin, C64) and *Myorem* (Robico Software, BBC B).

Although C64 gamers had to do without a Gold Medal standard game this month, there was plenty of Sizzler winners in *Zzap!64* for February. The beneficiaries were *Gauntlet* (US Gold), *Silicon Dreams* (Level 9/Rainbird), *Moonmist* (Infocom/Activision), *Dragon's Lair II: Escape From Singe's Castle* (Software Projects), *Park Patrol* (Firebird) and *They Stole A Million* (39 Step/Ariolasoft).

Newsfield's Amstrad magazine had Amtix Accolades lined up for *Gauntlet* (US Gold), *Into The Eagles Nest* (Pandora), *Starglider* (Rainbird), *The Sacred Armour Of Antiriad* (Palace Software), *Mercenary* (Novagen), and also *The Pawn* (Rainbird/Magnetic Scrolls) for PCW8256 gamers… all three of them.

THIS MONTH IN…

AMSTRAD COMPUTER USER



With the original *Gauntlet* riding high in the charts, clones were the flavour of the month with developers. *ACU* compared several *Gauntlet*-style titles, including *Storm* by Mastertronic, *Druid* by Firebird and *Dandy* by Electric Dreams, to see if there was anything better. Nope.



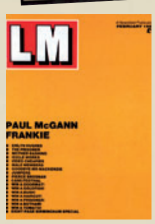
COMPUTER GAMER



CG's regular feature which highlighted the worst gaming offering this issue, Bane Of The Month, let us have an ogle at *Strip Poker* (Anco, Commodore Plus/4). It was the usual old tat, a crap game with rubbish digitised pictures. The review summary got straight to the point: buy a copy of *Playboy*.



LM



The first issue of the short-lived lifestyle magazine by Newsfield was finally out and to celebrate they reviewed cans of lager. So, in lieu of recent(ish) RG forum activity regarding ales, their (not very) definitive poll found that the best was Budweiser and the worst Barbican. You can kind of see why *LM* struggled…



CHARTS

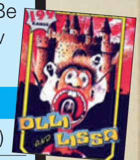
FEBRUARY 19987

MUSIC



1 I Knew You Were Waiting (For Me) (Aretha Franklin & George Michael)
2 Heartache (Pepsi & Shirlie)
3 Down To Earth (Curiosity Killed The Cat)
4 Almaz (Randy Crawford)
5 It Doesn't Have To Be That Way (The Blow Monkeys)

SPECTRUM



1 Olli & Lissa (Firebird)
2 Paperboy (Elite)
3 Uridium (Hewson)
4 Trivial Pursuit (Domark)
5 Infiltrator (US Gold)

COMMODORE 16



1 Winter Events (Anco)
2 Computer Hits 10 Volume 3 (Beau Jolly)
3 Torpedo Alley (Firebird)
4 Yie Ar Kung Fu (Imagine)
5 Blockbusters (Macsen)

AMSTRAD

1 Gauntlet (US Gold)
2 Computer Hits 10 Volume 3 (Beau Jolly)
3 Konami Coin-Ops (Imagine)
4 Trivial Pursuit (Domark)
5 Five Star Games (Beau Jolly)

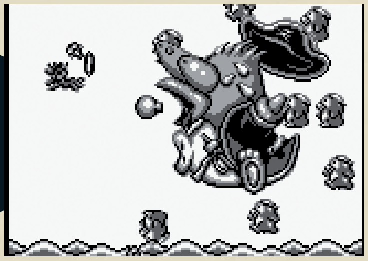


BACK TO THE NINETIES



THE LATEST NEWS FROM OCTOBER 1991

OCTOBER '91 – Magazines wave goodbye, Rollerbabes doesn't say hello, Hedgehog meets Master System, Sony forges on with console project and the Mistress Of The Dark gets another outing. Richard Burton gives Elvira a thorough once-over…



» [Game Boy] *Parodius*: It's not often you get shoot-'em-ups that give you end-of-level bosses that include ducks and cats.



» [Neo Geo] *King Of The Monsters*: Great visuals but the gameplay is as exciting as punching your own face. Hard.



» [Master System] *Sonic The Hedgehog*: Sega's decision to put it on its older console was purely for the gamers' benefit…

The uneasy stand-off between Sony, Nintendo and new best friend Philips was still on after Nintendo dumped Sony out of its plans for supplying the CD-ROM add-on for the proposed SNES-CD console and instead sidled up with CD-ROM competitor, Philips.

The deal between Sony and Nintendo was that Sony would create the CD-ROM add-on for the SNES console as well as a new all-in-one console containing both elements. Nintendo was happy with Sony's technology but wasn't enthusiastic about the finer points of the contract which stated that Sony would take a percentage of all Nintendo's CD-ROM games sales. Sony was promptly cut adrift.

After some legal wrangling and court battles between the two big boys, they eventually came to an amicable agreement. Sony decided to press ahead with its own project and within months the first appearance of what would eventually become the Sony PlayStation was unveiled. At that time it would've still had a port to accept Nintendo cartridge games, but Sony later ditched this to go it alone. October was seen as the month when the PS1 ball really started gathering pace.

Nintendo never released its SNES CD-ROM add-on, although thanks to the deal Philips did get to release a few Nintendo-licensed *Mario* and *Zelda* games on its own Philips CDi machine. Rubbish they were too.



Weekly magazine *New Computer Express* sadly ended its 154 issue run when Future Publishing pulled the plug. The trend of machine-specific monthly magazines led to plummeting sales and the inevitable followed, with the likes of *Popular Computing Weekly*, *Computer Gamesweek* and *Home Computing Weekly* having already departed to the great printing press in the sky.

After last month's news that Newsfield Publications had gone into liquidation, it came as no huge surprise to find that its multiformat magazine *Raze* was ending this month. Unlike *Crash* and *Zzap* which were sold to Europress, there were no takers for the beleaguered magazine and issue 12 was its last.

Also biting the dust was the text-intensive magazine that was *Commodore Disk User*. After 36 issues the publisher, Alphavite Publications, finally called it a day.

There was further Commodore-related sorrow when the company finally, and officially, called time on the ill-advised C64GS console. It decided enough was enough and distributors followed suit by slashing the retail price down to under £30.



» [SNES] *Super R-Type*: Great game but as brick hard as a breeze-block sandwich. Lovely graphics though…

Christmas may be but a couple of months away but that didn't stop the marketing gurus pushing the hottest trend in toys and games firmly in your face. Pizza-scoffing, sword-wielding reptiles would be vying for your Christmas Day time against the Queen's speech and inebriated family charades in the form of Mirrorsoft's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, a conversion of the hit coin-op arcade game. With all popular 8- and 16-bit systems catered for, there could be no escape from the heroes in a half shell.

Mirrorsoft wasn't pinning all its Christmas hopes on talking turtle heads. Having recently acquired the rights to use the name of US games developer Cinemaware, after it was liquidated, Mirrorsoft was busily re-releasing many of the developer's old titles onto a newly formed budget label, Mirror Image.

Oddly, Cinemaware of old reformed and became Acme Interactive, which continued developing games for Mirrorsoft. That

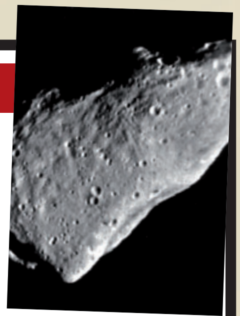


» [Amiga] *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*: Whilst the coin-op original was great, this was plain awful. Cowadunga dude.

1991

OCTOBER NEWS

For the first time ever, a sumo wrestling competition was held outside of Japan. 9 October saw the Royal Albert Hall host the five-day *basho* as part of the Japan Festival, an arts and history festival celebrating Japanese culture. The *basho* was eventually won by the then biggest sumo wrestler, the 37 stone Hawaiian man mountain Konishiki, also known as the Dump Truck.



» Although the asteroid was large, shapeless and moving slowly, the theory that it was sumo wrestler Konishiki was completely unfounded..



» It's Konishiki, one big lad with a mean handslap. Or is it E Honda, long time Street Fighter and scoffer of many pies?

The Galileo spacecraft, launched in October 1989 with a mission to study Jupiter and its moons, made the first ever fly-by of an asteroid on 29 October, taking detailed measurements and pictures of the asteroid 951Gaspra. Galileo finally arrived at Jupiter in December 1995, but not before taking some spectacular pictures in July 1994 of the fragmented comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 colliding into Jupiter, causing massive atmospheric disruptions to the planet.

24 October saw the passing of *Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry, at the age of 70. A year later some of his ashes were taken into space by the Space Shuttle Columbia and sent into orbit.





» [Amiga] *Elvira II: The Jaws Of Cerberus*: A terrific point-and-click adventure chock full of atmosphere. Top drawer stuff.



» [Amiga] *Rollerbabes*: Gremlin's unreleased game would've seen girls on skates giving all and sundry a right slapping.

was until Mirrorsoft got into financial difficulties itself and Mindscape took over the remnants of Cinemaware…

Mirrorsoft also had a couple of new sports-themed titles lined up for the full-price Cinemaware label. *TV Sports Baseball* would be in a similar vein to their previous *TV Sports* games: technical, strategic and full of number-crunching, head-numbing statistics. Then there was *Rollerbabes*…

Rollerbabes was an eagerly awaited game that would've seen teams of amply bosomed, big-haired women skating around a *Rollerball*-style sporting arena, smacking the living daylights out of each other in the name of competitive sport. Unfortunately, the project was cancelled virtually as the game was completed, with eventual owner Mindscape citing it was unsuitable. So no high-speed boobies for you, m'laddo…

But wait, breast redemption could be at hand with the news that Accolade was working on a sequel to *Elvira: Mistress Of The Dark*. The new game would feature more of the same point-and-click adventure-based role-playing shenanigans in which the buxom one needed to be saved from the multi-headed Cerberus. *Elvira II: The Jaws Of Cerberus* would be available for Amiga and PC within a couple of months.

Finally, with *Sonic The Hedgehog* still conquering all put before it, it came as no surprise that Sega would be releasing a version for the Master System soon. Ker-ching!

Computer & Video Games was doling out the C&VG Hit mark of quality to an eclectic selection of games for February including *Geoman Land* (Konami, SNES), *Magic Pockets* (Renegade, Amiga), *UN Squadron* (Capcom, SNES), *Streets Of Rage* (Sega, Mega Drive), *King Of The Monsters* (SNK, Neo Geo), *Starflight* (Electronic Arts, Mega Drive), *Mega-Lo-Mania* (Image Works, Amiga) and *F117-A Stealth Fighter 2* (Microprose, PC).

Multiformat magazine *Zero* granted Zero Hero status to *Secret Weapons Of The Luftwaffe* (Lucasfilm/US Gold, PC), *Microprose Golf* (Microprose, Atari ST), *Magic Pockets* (Renegade, Amiga), *Gunship 2000* (Microprose, PC) and the budget release of *Xenon 2* (Mirror Image, Amiga).

If you were looking for Console Classic rated games then *Zero* also obliged by offering up *EA Hockey* (Electronic Arts, Mega Drive), *Super R-Type* (Irem, SNES) and *Parodius* (Konami, Game Boy) for your gaming pleasure.

THIS MONTH IN…



ZERO

Rollerbabes by Cinemaware; so close to being released, it even made the front cover of Zero and they ran a double-page preview, including some fine-looking in-game screenshots. It was never released even though it was due out within a matter of days and still remains lost today. Former Cinemaware programmers – get rummaging!





RAZE

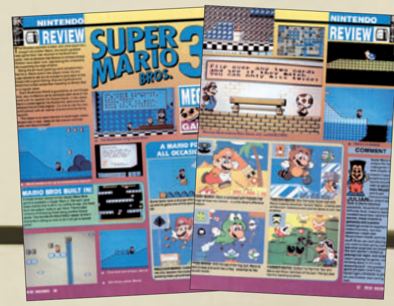
If you ever wanted to throw down the gauntlet to your NES-playing mates, you're in luck. *Raze* play-tested Mattel's new Power Glove, which did away with the need for controllers and allowed you to point and gesture for games control. All sounds a bit faddish but it worked very well.





MEAN MACHINES

Mario was everywhere: on the cover and on a further eight pages inside, including a review of the brand new *Super Mario Bros 3* game for the NES (it got 98%). The *Mean Machines* guys considered (at that time) that it was the greatest videogame ever.



CHARTS

SEPTEMBER 1991



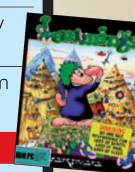
AMIGA

1 Manchester United Europe (Krisalis)
2 F-15 Strike Eagle II (MicroProse)
3 Full Contact (Team 17)
4 Secret Of Monkey Island (US Gold/Lucasfilm)
5 Xenon 2: Megablast (Mirror Image)



ATARI ST

1 Manchester United Europe (Krisalis)
2 Xenon 2: Megablast (Mirror Image)
3 Ninja Rabbits (Micro Value)
4 Lombard RAC Rally (Hit Squad)
5 Flames Of Freedom (Rainbird)

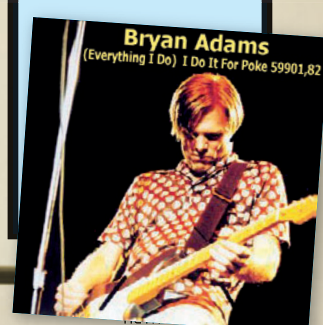


PC

1 Lemmings (Psygnosis)
2 Jet Fighter 2 (US Gold/Velocity)
3 Megatraveller 1 (Empire)
4 Castles (Electronic Arts)
5 Sim Earth (Ocean)

MUSIC

1 (Everything I Do) I Do It For You (Bryan Adams)
2 Wind Of Change (Scorpions)
3 Get Ready For This (2 Unlimited)
4 Insanity (Oceanic)
5 Always Look On The Bright Side Of Life (Monty Python)



11

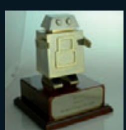
retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL

WHERE'S MY BONES?

LIKE BUBBLE GHOST ONLY NOT



» **PUBLISHER:** INTERCEPTOR SOFTWARE
» **RELEASED:** 1984
» **GENRE:** ADVENTURE
» **FEATURED HARDWARE:** COMMODORE 64
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1



HISTORY

This is not, I imagine in many people's lists of top ten games – or even top hundreds for that matter – but it nevertheless managed to keep my C64-owning mate (I was still in Speccy land at the time) and myself occupied to the point of being totally obsessed with it for a short stint in 1984.

Where's My Bones? was/is (I never actually reached the end) a single scrolling screen maze that you, as a ghost, had to negotiate in order to get your precious bones back. Or at least that's how I viewed it as I distinctly remember a pile of bones lurking at the end, taunting me as it stayed forever out of my reach. Its challenge came, not so much from the various nasties that were constantly blocking your progress, but from the incredibly unforgiving pixel-perfect collision detection that gave absolutely no room for error.

There we would sit in rapt attention as we took it in turns to, ever so gently, tap the joystick in the huge hope of being able to get through an unforgiving gap that was exactly the same height as our ghost. One pixel out and it was game over (man, game over). Of course, it probably didn't help that we were still using a ropy old Atari 2600 joystick, for which precision was a completely foreign concept, but that just didn't matter to us. The game was constantly testing the pair of us and we were enjoying the (admittedly frustrating) challenge it presented.

Where's My Bones? is certainly not the best game in the world, but its mark on us was such that we still remember and reference it in conversation even today, some 24 years later after its original release.

Lee Braine, wherever you are, I salute you and hope that you found your bones.

Want to appear in the magazine? Then be sure to upload classic profiles at www.retrogamer.net





RETROBATE PROFILE

» **NAME:** WIL OVERTON
» **JOINED:** 20 JULY 2008
» **LOCATION:** WARWICKSHIRE
» **OCCUPATION:** ILLUSTRATOR
» **FAV GAMES SYSTEM:** SUPER FAMICOM

HISTORY IN YOUR HANDS

Gaming on the go – that has always been the defining intention of the handheld: a means to play our beloved videogames any time, any place, anywhere. Over the past 30 years we have seen many portable consoles impress and, frankly, bemuse. So join Retro Gamer as we load up on batteries, find some natural light and look back at the history of portable gaming

That things are getting smaller is a trend that is becoming increasingly more difficult to ignore. Phones, microprocessors, computers, televisions (well they're becoming thinner anyway) all seem to be a getting that little bit harder to locate around the house nowadays. Although the same cannot be said for our beloved games consoles (the first Xbox looks like it was designed in a episode of *Scrapheap Challenge*, and the PS3 is so heavy you actually have to bend your knees to pick it up), videogames have always been linked to compaction. Over the years, the application of portable gaming has evolved dramatically from what it once was. It's clear that today's handhelds are used more in and around the house than they are ever used out of it, and no company has been quicker to realise this curious trend than Nintendo. Through the DS, you can brush up on some classic fiction, become a culinary wizard, or even prep the brain for the *Sunday Times* crossword puzzle. Yet despite these new niches the DS is quickly discovering, the focus for most true handhelds has always been, first and foremost, for videogames. From as far back as 1979 electronic companies have been trying to drag videogames from the face of television sets and into the palms of your hands. Mobile gaming predates the NES, the Vectrex, the Spectrum and Sega's first entry into the home console market. And while you'd be forgiven for thinking that the medium originated with the advent of the Game & Watch, the first example was actually released a year earlier to Gunpei Yokoi's seminal creation, and it was designed by an American.

1979

Milton Bradley Microvision

• **Released:** 1979 • **Number of Games:** 12 • **Games Developed Until:** 1981

Milton Bradley is more commonly known for its tangible approach to game playing, with the US company building up a solid reputation in the West for its popular range of board games. But seeing the profits that videogames could potentially yield, the company dipped its playing pieces into the videogame market, with varying degrees of success. Milton Bradley most famously entered the videogame fray with the release of the Vectrex in 1982 – the world's only videogame machine built entirely around vector technology. And while the Vectrex isn't a handheld per se, it is a console that was designed with manoeuvrability in mind. Resembling a mobile arcade unit, the Vectrex display/machine setup comprised a wonderfully slim built-in monitor and a fold out control pad, which made the machine compact and easily mobile. It should come as no great surprise then that its creator, Jay Smith, can be traced back to being the true inventor of the first portable games machine with a device he released two years before Nintendo unveiled Game & Watch on the world. Smith, who started working for Mattel before establishing his own company, Smith Engineering/Western Technologies, set about working on an ambitious new device to allow kids to play electronic games on the go. The Microvision, as it was known, had a monochrome black and white 16 x 16 pixel LCD display that used overlay cards to give the illusion of colour in its games. With its small library of 12 titles, and each 2K sized game cart housing the CPU chip that ran the machine, isolated, the Microvision was simply an empty shell with an LCD display, on/off switch and contrast button. Even the fascia buttons (the number of which would vary depending on the game you were playing) were integrated into the game packs themselves. The Microvision was released in America and Europe, and was bundled with the *Breakout* clone called *Block Buster*. Software for the machine ceased in 1981.





» Smith's Microvision marks the first page in the history of the handheld; it was unique in that its game cartridges each contained the CPU from which the machine ran.



» So Nintendo basically owes everything to the calculator then. Whoever said maths is boring, eh?







1980

Nintendo Game & Watch

• **Released:** 1980 • **Number of Games:** 60 • **Games Developed Until:** 1991
• **Variants:** Gold, Silver, Crystal, Multi-Screen, Widescreen, Panorama, Super Color, Micro Vs

While Nintendo began its videogame tenure developing and manufacturing arcade machines, the big N's first stab at videogame hardware for the home (and on the road) was the Game & Watch. After Nintendo technician Gunpei Yokoi spied a Japanese businessman tapping the buttons of his pocket calculator, Yokoi found the inspiration for the machine that would ultimately pave the way for Nintendo's dominance in the pocket-sized gaming market. Released in 1980, and remaining on sale for a further ten years, the Game & Watch entered a market that was crammed to the hilt with LCD-style games. However, many were crudely made, uninspired and were surprisingly cumbersome, with many manufacturers choosing to adopt the tabletop arcade look of the Adventure Vision. Ironically, it was this saturated LCD market that proved beneficial to Yokoi's creation. At the time, owing that LCD parts were in abundance, Yokoi could keep the production costs and the price of the Game & Watch units down to an affordable minimum. Slightly bigger than a credit card, the Game & Watch boasted a healthy battery life, was pocket-sized and amazingly durable; all qualities that helped it sit effortlessly in the hands of portable gaming. In fact, the design of the Game & Watch was so far ahead of its time that Yokoi would fuse many of its characteristics into the Game Boy, and Nintendo would use the 'Multi-Screen' look in the design of the DS. Furthermore, the handheld's four-button controls would later be adapted into the cross-shaped D-pad that was incorporated into all Nintendo controllers. Owing to the success of the Game & Watch, Nintendo released an impressive 60 titles spread across the eight different variants of the machine. The first Game & Watch title was the juggling game *Ball*, and the final, which would pay homage to that first game, was *Mario Juggler*. It was released in 1991.





» The Adventure Vision may boast (if that's the right word) the smallest library of games on this list, but that hasn't stopped it from being popular with collectors.

1982

Entex Adventure Vision

• Released: 1982 **• Number of Games:** 4 **• Games Developed Until:** 1982

While not a direct sibling, this rare tabletop machine could serve as the spiritual stopgap between Smith's Microvision and Vectrex machines. Designed by Entex, then a well-established maker of portable LCD and LED games, the Adventure Vision took the appearance of a tabletop arcade and used interchangeable game cartridges that slotted tidily into its control dashboard. The games were controlled using a small silver joystick; either side of it sat two clusters of four fascia buttons to ensure the machine was accessible to both left- and right-handed gamers. Like the Vectrex, the Adventure Vision is memorable for using an unusual method to project its games onto its screen. Whereas Smith's vector machine drew clean, striking white vector lines, Entex's visuals were made up of flickering red dots courtesy of a spinning mirror that would amplify a single strip of 40 red LED lights to a 150 x 40 resolution. With a library of just four games – including a port of the arcade classic *Defender* and the *Asteroids* clone *Space Force* – plus its distinct, deep red visuals, in some ways the style and ambition of the system shares many similarities with Nintendo's Virtual Boy.

1989

Nintendo Game Boy

• Released: 1989 **• Number of Games:** 1,200 **• Games Developed Until:** 2002 **• Variants:** Game Boy Color, Game Boy Pocket, Game Boy Light

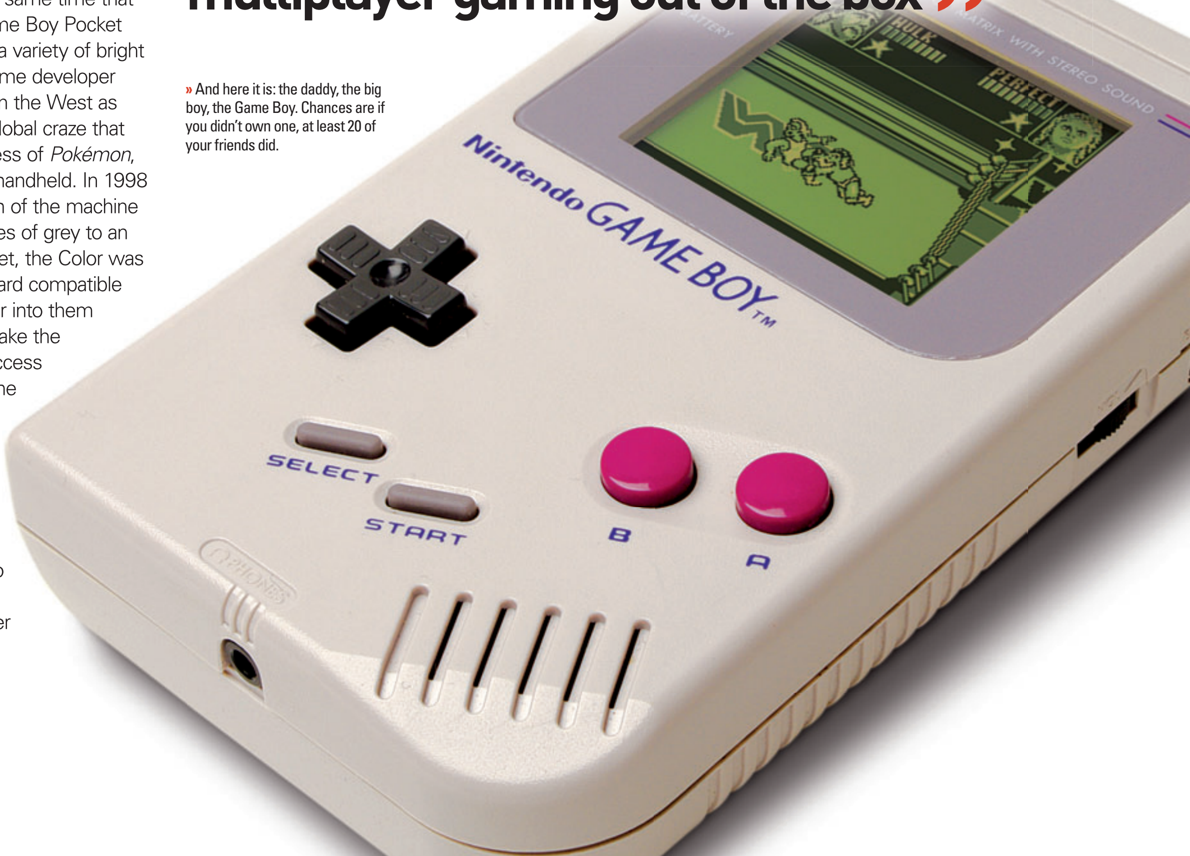
At unit sales of 120 million, the Game Boy is the most successful videogame console in history. The Game Boy built wonderfully on what Nintendo and Yokoi had achieved with the Game & Watch. The look was chosen to be NES grey, while its controls mimicked the NES pad (the black four-point D-pad, A, B, Select and Start buttons) to ensure it looked and felt instantly familiar with Nintendo fans. Some gamers bemoaned the machine's dour yellowish visuals (actually comprising four shades of grey) and lack of a backlight (which meant a lot of fiddling around with the contrast button and trying to find nooks of natural light). However, its portability, fulsome selection of games, impressive battery life (up to ten hours from four AAs) and the Russian puzzle classic *Tetris*, which was bundled with the machine alongside a link-up capable to allow multiplayer gaming out the box, immediately ensured its success. And Game Boy's timing could not have been better. Nintendo became the first developer to quench the desire for portable gaming in the late Eighties. Titles such as *Super Mario Land* and the excellent *Link's Awakening* further strengthened the popularity of Nintendo's mighty mobile. However, it was in 1995 that the Game Boy's popularity would really catch a second wind. At the same time that Nintendo was gearing up for the release of the Game Boy Pocket – a smaller version of the handheld which came in a variety of bright colours – Nintendo, in partnership with the videogame developer Game Freak, unleashed *Pocket Monsters* (known in the West as *Pokémon*) onto an unsuspecting public, igniting a global craze that breathed new life into the machine. After the success of *Pokémon*, Nintendo continued to release more variants of its handheld. In 1998 it rolled out the Game Boy Color – a popular version of the machine that upped the Game Boy's display from four shades of grey to an impressive 56 colours. Slightly larger than the Pocket, the Color was supported by its own library of games, was backward compatible with Game Boy titles and could even breathe colour into them too. This was enough to convince consumers to make the upgrade, and the Game Boy Color was another success for Nintendo. Launched around the same time as the Game Boy Color in Japan, Nintendo also released the Game Boy Light. It was a marginally bigger, but lighter, version of the original Game Boy that was fitted with a backlight. With an astonishing 12 hours of battery life with its backlight on, and 20 hours without, the Light boasts the best consumption of all the Game Boy variants Nintendo released. But owing to a less than enthusiastic reaction to the machine from the East, it sadly never made it to Western shores.

Yeah… About those tabletop games

While we have paid special tribute to the Game & Watch and Adventurevision in this feature, as many handheld devotees know, there was a bevy of tabletop and cool portable games released during in the late '80s to early '90s (with certain LCD titles based on popular franchises like *High School Musical* appearing even now). Many were classic games in their own right, with the majority of well loved titles coming from the stables of electronic toy manufacturers, Tomy and Grandstand. Grandstand was responsible for giving us popular classics such as *Munchman*, *Astro Wars*, *Krazy Kong* and *BMX Burner*, while Tomy brought us the Tomytronic range, and the delights of *Alien Attack*, *Space Turbo* and a bizarre little handheld that made thousands of kids raid their mum's pantries to rip the labels off tins of beans; the Barcode Battler. Sadly, we didn't have enough space this issue to take a detailed look at them all, but rest assured we're planning to explore their history and contribution to portable gaming in a separate feature very soon. In the meantime here are a few images of some of our favourite tabletop games; do they ring any bells with you?



> "Tetris was bundled with the machine alongside a link-up cable to allow multiplayer gaming out of the box"



» And here it is: the daddy, the big boy, the Game Boy. Chances are if you didn't own one, at least 20 of your friends did.



» Before the Lynx became the Lynx it was known as the 'Handy'. Whilst visually impressive it drained batteries like there was no tomorrow. It's bulky design was also a hindrance for gamers on the go.

1989

Atari Lynx

• **Released:** 1989 • **Number of Games:** 85 • **Games Developed Until:** 1994

Epyx was a big player in Amiga software development, but by the mid-Eighties the company was looking to break into the hardware market and assigned Dave Needle and RJ Mical from the Amiga development team to spearhead a new handheld project. Knowing that it couldn't bankroll the entire project itself, Epyx set about inviting various third-party hardware developers to come in with it on its machine. Following a disastrous meeting with Nintendo (the details of which you can read about in our full retroinspection of the Lynx back in issue 43), in 1988 Epyx eventually sold the idea to Atari and the Atari Lynx was born. The Lynx is notable for being both the first 16-bit and colour handheld to be released into the marketplace, but despite its impressive power it was far from perfect. As well as being almost twice the cost of the Game Boy, the Lynx (when not sharing a room with either a Virtual Boy or a Game Gear wearing an SMS converter plugged with an SMS game and donning a screen magnifier) was one of the largest handhelds released into the market. However, despite its chunkiness, poor battery life (you get a paltry four hours for six batteries) and weight – you need leg muscles and pockets like a kangaroo to ferry this beast around with you – it remains one of the finest examples of a portable arcade machine you can find. The Lynx was home to 30 of the most impressive arcade conversions ever seen on any handheld, with wonderfully faithful renditions of *Xenophobe*, *Rampage*, *Joust*, *APB*, *Xybots*, *Paperboy* and *Rygar* – not to mention some equally excellent titles in *Chip's Challenge*, *Blue Lightning* and a fantastic port of *Lemmings*. But while the Lynx was home to some classic games, sadly its prohibitive price, coupled with the impenetrable popularity of the Game Boy (which was released in the same year) and the arrival of the Game Gear, would quickly draw third-party developers away from the machine, and it was clear the Lynx was going to be muscled out of the market. While the Lynx is mainly criticised for its impractical size, rumour has it that its large size wasn't down to the cramming of cutting-edge technology but rather the misguided opinions of the world's worst focus group. Apparently, after being shown both small and large prototypes of the handheld, the panel preferred the bigger version. To later try to remedy the size issue, Atari released a revised version of the Lynx, called Lynx II, in 1991. The second generation was slightly smaller and lighter (although not by much), had a better directional pad, stereo headphone output and improved battery consumption. While its release did see a slight climb in Lynx sales, the combined marketing muscle of both Nintendo and Sega proved too overpowering for Atari, and the Lynx was gradually pushed out of the market.



1990

Game Gear

• **Released:** 1990 • **Number of Games:** 300 • **Games Developed Until:** 1996

While Nintendo opted for mobility and lengthy battery life with the Game Boy, Sega hedged its bets on dazzling gamers with a 32-colour machine with a backlight. Of course, in those days such opulence came at a cost, and as a result the Game Gear was noticeably more expensive and larger than the Game Boy. However, while the Game Gear would mimic the Game Boy's two-button configuration, it did boast a more ergonomic directional pad – it was concave, allowing it to fit the thumb more comfortably. One important and oft overlooked difference between Sega and Nintendo's handhelds was the fact that the Game Gear was heavily based on home console technology: the Master System. The Game Boy, past design, shared few similarities with the NES mainly because the technology sitting inside the machines was so radically different. In fact, so similar are Sega's 8-bit machines (the most notable difference is that the Game Gear has a far greater colour palette), that Sega later capitalised on the fact by releasing a Master System converter for the Game Gear, which doubled its library of games. Yet, despite the clear relationship that existed between the Game Gear and Master System, it would turn out to be the Mega Drive that would prove the Game Gear's most valuable ally in the ensuing handheld war. The Game Gear shifted an impressive 30 million units in its lifetime, and that interest was no doubt sparked by both the Genesis's popularity in North America and the Game Gear's varied library of games which came courtesy of the many developer relationships Sega had established through Mega Drive/Genesis software licences. With titles such as *Mortal Kombat*, *John Madden* and *Shining Force* appearing on the Game Gear, Sega's handheld – like the Mega Drive – effortlessly found appeal with older gamers, with even its promotional adverts trying to separate it from the kiddie-focused feel of Nintendo's popular handheld.

» The Game Gear is essentially just a Sega Master System squeezed into a handheld. In fact, every one of Sega's portable machines was closely linked to its home consoles.



1990

NEC PC Engine GT

• **Released:** 1990 • **Number of Games:** 320 • **Games Developed Until:** 1994

Proving that power comes at a cost, the NEC PC Engine GT (renamed the TurboExpress in the West), at a wallet-tearing $299, was one of the most expensive handhelds to come to market. Its design is a clear mesh of Game Boy meets Game Gear – taking the Game Boy's portrait shape but spraying it with the mean dark look of Sega's handheld. The PC Engine GT is essentially just a mobile PC Engine, and as such was compatible with all the machine's HuCards – which lent themselves brilliantly to mobile gaming. That meant that when the PC Engine GT came to market it was instantly supported by an impressive array of varied software. However, and this is a warning to importers out there, the GT is one of the few handhelds – other examples being the Sega Nomad and DSi – that adhere to region lockout, seeing that (with the exception of the DSi) these handhelds were just portable versions of their territorial-adhering TV-based cousins. With its colourful active-matrix screen and large library of games, the PC Engine GT (from a technical and software standpoint) blew away the competition. But that impressiveness meant somewhere there had to be a catch, and sadly that snag was a hefty price tag and poor battery consumption (a pathetic two hours' play from six AA batteries). Quality control also proved to be a huge problem for the GT late on in life. While the GT Engine projected games in glorious rich colour, its display suffered from poor resolution and dead pixels, and the sound output was notably poor, doing nothing to help persuade consumers it was worth the lofty asking price. Ultimately it was the GT's price that really prevented it from penetrating the market, along with its risky software tie with the PC Engine; as the GT only fed from software developed for its big brother, when the PC Engine took a battering after the Super Nintendo's launch in North America, its slump in popularity took with it the hopes and ambitions of NEC's handheld.

» The PC Engine GT was targeted towards the more affluent gamer – like rich kids from Beverly Hills, not the likes of those earning a living by shovelling newspapers down the throats of letterboxes.





» This weird-looking handheld from China tried to compete with the Game Boy and failed miserably.

1991

Watara Supervision

• **Released:** 1989 • **Number of Games:** 40 • **Games Developed Until:** 1992

Released two years after Nintendo's million-selling handheld, the Supervision could almost be described as a Game Boy Picasso. All the right Game Boy fascia elements can be seen (four shades of grey LCD screen, contrast toggle, A, B, Select and Start buttons); they're just found in different places. The Supervison, which originated in China, was designed to be a cheap alternative to the Game Boy. Its odd open clamshell design featured two different-sized plastic cases that were connected by a swivelling rubber joint which tilted its 160 x 160 pixel LCD display but also prohibited the machine from folding into itself. This meant it was clunkier than its monochrome muse. Originally manufactured by the Asian company Watara, the Supervision was licensed by several companies, including Audiosonic, Hartung and peripheral manufacturer Quickshot. But with sparse advertising, cumbersome looks and paltry software (only 40 titles were released for the machine), it drifted quickly into obscurity.



» The Virtual Boy marks a rather nasty red blip on an otherwise impeccable technological legacy for Yokoi, but was he really to blame?

1995

Virtual Boy

• **Released:** 1995 • **Number of Games:** 22 • **Games Developed Until:** 1995

The 32-bit Virtual Boy marks a bridge too far for Nintendo. In a market it knew like the back of its hand, overreaching and rushed development would see the portable giant get its hands burnt. The brainchild of Gunpei Yokoi, the Virtual Boy was a bold handheld. The ditching of mobility for the benefit of 3D gaming caused huge confusion for Nintendo when trying to promote the Virtual Boy as a handheld, in a rush to try to capitalise on the growing Virtual Reality craze that was sweeping the globe. Predictably, the clunky headset design of the Virtual Boy was heavily criticised by many of the gaming press following the machine's unveiling at Space World in 1994, but you could understand Nintendo's thinking behind the quirky design. A headset was necessary to instil a keen sensation of an extra dimension and, to that end, the 3D technology that Nintendo had licensed, which worked through a combination of piling games with plenty of parallax scrolling and offsetting images to individual eyes, was functional but impractical for a handheld format. One interesting rumour about the Virtual Boy is that the machine was believed to still be in its development stages when it was released, but an inpatient Nintendo, wanting to focus its efforts and time on the launch of the N64, ordered Yokoi to rush it to market. Had Yokoi been given more time to refine his creation, there's a strong chance that the design and fate for the Virtual Boy could have been much different. Another criticism put to the Virtual Boy was the overbearing red colour of its games, which were courtesy of the red LED lights it used to display its games (red LEDs were used as they were cheaper). While gamers could handle the green-yellow tinge of the Game Boy's monochrome display, the dark and unwelcoming red worlds that the Virtual Boy painted proved a little too much for some eyes. Moreover, both the 3D visuals and red coloration of the graphics meant the Virtual Boy wasn't built for prolonged play. Gamers soon complained of eye strain and headaches, and as the unit had to be sat on a table and viewed like eye-test apparatus, it was criticised for being uncomfortable too. Not surprisingly, when the machine was launched in Japan and North America, consumers and software developers needed no further persuasion to strike the Virtual Boy down as a flawed gimmick, and the life of the machine was quickly over.

1997

Tiger Game.Com

• **Released:** 1997 • **Number of Games:** 20 • **Games Developed Until:** 1999

Tiger was an arm of toy giant Hasbro that specialised in producing electronic LCD toys. Inspired by the success of the Game Boy, Tiger quickly set about developing a handheld that was years ahead of its time. Stumbling on a trend that wouldn't occur in the handheld market until almost ten years later, the Tiger Game.Com pushed the functionality of mobile gaming into bold new realms. Firstly, Tiger's machine was touch-screen and came packed with a stylus wand that slotted tidily into its casing. With the aid of an internet cartridge, it could access a text browser and e-mail facility. The Game.com's graphics were the same as Game Boy's four shades of grey, but its LCD screen was larger. Despite a keen price point (the original model sold for about $60, while the second, Game.Com Pocket Pro, was a staggeringly cheap $30) and gallant efforts by Tiger to secure such licenses as *Duke Nukem*, *Mortal Kombat* and *Virtua Fighter*, the machine struggled to attract enough third-party interest and was eventually dropped by Hasbro in 1999.



» The Game.Com was offering DS-like functions seven years before Nintendo's latest handheld, but it didn't have the marketing muscle to back it up.

We're Gonna Need Bigger Hands



SEGA NOMAD

Effectively a portable Mega Drive, this is the essence of flawed brilliance. Sadly, it's also region-encoded so will only play US Genesis titles (although rare adaptors are available). Priced at a staggering $200 at launch, it allowed Sega to generate further revenue from the Genesis's popularity. With no titles made exclusively for the machine, awful battery consumption and an ill thought out second joypad port for multiplayer games, it failed to appeal and Sega was later forced to offload the handheld for half of the original retail price.



PC ENGINE LT

Released in 1991, The LT was a slight variation of the GT. With a clamshell design similar in look to the Advance SP, but bigger and heavier, and retailing at 100,000 yen, it was the most expensive PC Engine variant. To cushion the blow, the LT did boast a superior 5-inch display that helped remedy some of the resolution and pixel deaths plaguing GT screens. To eke further life from the handheld, NEC cleverly added a port that allowed the LT to be hooked up to the CD-ROM component, making it compatible with all TurboDuo games too.



MEGA JET

The Mega Jet was originally intended for use as in-flight entertainment for Japanese Airlines, hence its name, but later it found a commercial release in Japan. The Mega Jet is an all-encompassing Mega Drive/control pad unit similar to the Nomad handheld, but lacking a display. Without a screen, users had to hook the device to a TV to play it (which obviously harmed its 'handheld-ability'). Nonetheless, it did prove an easier way for Japanese gamers to play their Mega Drive collection on the road (or in the air).

1999

Neo Geo Pocket

• **Released:** 1999 • **Number of Games:** 80 • **Games Developed Until:** 2001

Given its long and rich history in the hardware market, it was inevitable that SNK would join the handheld fray at some point. The company's final console surprises by sharing little in common with its previous arcade-style consoles – the AES, MVS and Neo Geo CD. Released in Japan in 1998, the 16-bit Neo Geo Pocket stunned everyone with its simplicity. Rather than go down the PC Engine GT route and throw plenty of cutting-edge technology at the machine, SNK chose the more functional Game Boy approach, and not surprisingly the Pocket proved perfectly apt for portable gaming. A wonderful, sharp screen that display eight shades of grey crisp, and a responsive analogue nub to replace directional buttons, meant the handheld was well armed to take on the portable versions of SNK's popular arcade hits, particularly its many beat-'em-ups. With scaled-down versions of *Samurai Shodown*, *Fatal Fury*, *Metal Slug* and *The King Of Fighters* released on the machine, the Pocket's commercial assault was heavily supported by SNK IP. However, shortly after the machine's launch in Japan, Bandai would throw a spanner in SNK's plans by unveiling the WonderSwan – a machine that looked and felt very similar to the Pocket. Thanks to Bandai's marketing muscle, and the fact the WonderSwan quickly found appeal among both boys and girls, it soon overtook SNK's handheld in the market, but by then both parties had another mutual threat to contend with: the Game Boy Color. In response, SNK quickly followed up its portable with the Pocket Color in 1999, which added a superior colour TFT display to compete with the Game Boy Color. The Pocket Color did find its way to this side of the Atlantic but, owing to the sheer popularity of the Game Boy Colour and a problematic launch (resulting from poor communication between SNK's East and West offices), it was slow to find interest from established developers and consumers. With SNK facing falling arcade, Neo Geo and eventually Pocket sales, the company was bought out and fragmented in 2000, later returning to our screens as SNK Playmore, and the Neo Geo Pocket was no more.



HISTORY IN YOUR HANDS

1999

Bandai WonderSwan

• **Released:** 1999 • **Number of Games:** 200 • **Games Developed Until:** 2003
• **Variants:** WonderSwan Color, WonderSwan Crystal

The story behind the WonderSwan is a tragic one. It marks the end of Gunpei Yokoi's handheld legacy before his premature death in a tragic motor accident, aged 56. Following the commercial flop of the Virtual Boy, Yokoi left Nintendo and went on to form his own company, Koto Laboratory. It was then that Yokoi was approached by the toy and television company Bandai – which had experience in the LCD market, producing electronic toys such as the popular Tamagotchi virtual pet – to help it enter the handheld videogames market. Seeing Yokoi and his company as the perfect partners to achieve this, Bandai gave him carte blanche when it came to designing the new machine. The WonderSwan was typical of Yokoi's previous handheld efforts: sleek, stylish and perfectly portable. Launched in a trio of attractive colours, affordable and christened with a name you'd not likely forget in a hurry, it immediately stood out, finding an almost instant appeal among gamers in Japan (most prominently girls) where it sold 1.55 million units. The console's monochrome screen, which was chosen to ensure greater battery life, belied impressive architecture and functionality. The WonderSwan ran from a 16-bit CPU, which was a huge step up from the 8-bit Sharp Z80 CPU found inside the Game Boy, and featured a novel dual control system that allowed the machine to be played either horizontally or vertically. While the first machine to offer this function was the Atari Lynx, the WonderSwan was the first handheld to really utilise the function to any noteworthy extent, allowing many of its games – including the machine's popular puzzle game *Gunpei EX* (developed and named after Yokoi himself) – to be played in portrait aspect. The icing on the cake came from the machine's impressive battery life, which offered a jaw-dropping 40 hours. To try to compete with the Game Boy Color, a year after the WonderSwan's launch Bandai released a successor which added a 2.9-inch, 241-colour display. The WonderSwan Color had its own range of titles and was backward compatible with older software, although it lacked the Game Boy Color's ingenious colour upscaling. The following year Bandai released its final WonderSwan variant; the WonderSwan Crystal featured a more robust case and a crisp TFT screen which solved some of the blurring issues that occurred in the older models. Despite the strong user base and inroads that the WonderSwan generated for Bandai, the company never again entered the handheld market and eventually pulled the plug on the machine in 2003.



» Sleek and powerful, the WonderSwan proved popular with Japanese gamers.





» The GBA went from being the one of the largest to the smallest handheld that Nintendo released.

2001

Game Boy Advance

• **Released:** 2001 • **Number of Games:** 800 • **Games Developed Until:** 2008
• **Variants:** Advance SP, GB Micro

Nintendo would again misfire with the original design of its next handheld. The Game Boy Advance (GBA) was launched in Japan 2001, and ditched the tall and slim portrait shape of the Game Boy for a fatter, Game Gear-esque shape and control configuration. The design proved a bad move for the new handheld, even with the impressive power it had under its hood. The GBA housed an impressive 32-bit RISC CPU, 32K of Memory and could display 526 colours on its crisp, blur-free TFT LCD screen. Two years after the machine's Japanese launch, Nintendo rolled out a clamshell variant – the Advance SP – into the marketplace. Nintendo shrunk down the look of the machine to make it more in keeping with the size and look of Game & Watch Multi-Screens, added a much-needed backlight and better battery consumption, and made it backward compatible with both Game Boy and Game Boy Color software – again making that decision to upgrade much easier for Game Boy users. In 2005 Nintendo would make one final change to the design of the GBA; it was a move that turned the originally quite bulky-looking machine into the smallest handheld ever released. While the tiny size of the Micro meant Nintendo was forced to drop the Game Boy and Color backward compatibility, the handheld did boast a wonderfully sharp backlight. But being released at the same time as the DS, it was the Micro handheld that struggled to continue Game Boy's popular heritage. While the GBA series failed to reach the same levels of success as previous Game Boy incarnations, it still managed to shift an impressive 30 million units in its lifetime and was a massive success for Nintendo.



» The PSP is the most technologically advanced handheld ever released. But it's not all rosy for Sony's handheld – shocking loading times, an unpopular movie format and far too many buttons.

2004

PSP

• **Released:** 2004 • **Number of Games:** Ongoing • **Games Developed Until:** Ongoing • **Variants:** PSP Slim & Lite

The brainchild of Ken 'the father of the PlayStation' Kutaragi, the PSP (Portable PlayStation) is the most powerful handheld on the market today. With a colossal 16:9 LCD display, capable of displaying over 16 million colours, and graphics comparable to that of the PS2, the machine is an impressive beast. While Sony was untested in the waters of portable gaming before the PSP's release, it was not entirely wet behind the ears when it came to the field of portable electronics. The electronics giant's Walkman range of audio cassette, radio and CD players had been hugely successful, and Sony had also released products in the PDA market with its Clie series of pocket PCs. This fact wasn't lost on Kutaragi and his team, who were quick to promote the PSP as an all-encompassing media device. Through the PSP's new UMD storage format (a tiny disc), it was possible to watch movies (the first handheld to offer this function), download and store MP3s and firmware, and upload pictures. It was also possible to connect to other PSPs, PS3s and the internet via Wi-Fi. Despite slow sales initially, the PSP's popularity has been steady. It now stands as the bestselling non-Nintendo handheld ever released, and the release of the stylish PSP Slim & Lite, which ditched the heavy metal chassis to make the machine about 30% lighter, has only helped to further its portability and appeal.

2004

DS

• **Released:** 2004 • **Number of Games:** Ongoing • **Games Developed Until:** Ongoing • **Variants:** DS Lite, DSi

Leaving the Game Boy name behind was a risky move by Nintendo. The name had developed into a strong media brand, a stamp that had become synonymous with portable brilliance, so it was no surprise that the DS took its time to win over the sceptics. The DS's dual screens and the use of touch-screen technology immediately raised doubts as to the machine's functionality as a portable game console, and Nintendo didn't help matters by disassociating its latest handheld from the Game Boy, advocating the DS as a partner to the Game Boy rather than an out-and-out successor. This notion was clearly backed by Nintendo's decision to launch the GBA Micro – the smallest handheld Nintendo released – in the same year as the DS. So while many were trying to get their head around how stylus controls and dual screens would translate well into videogames, and where the DS would sit in Nintendo's long-term plans, Nintendo's new console geared up for its release. With wireless LAN and PictoChat software used for effortless multiplayer and data sharing, the DS had all bases covered, and quickly the machine's popularity gained momentum. Knowing it was on to a winner, Nintendo decided it was time to tackle the one area that the DS was clearly lacking: looks. Whereas the original DS was on the chunky side, the much sleeker DS Lite was a far more stylish machine. And Nintendo's fresh new revamp found the DS become the most successful Nintendo handheld after the Game Boy. As you read this, Nintendo will have just launched third iteration of the handheld in the UK. Launched in Japan last November, the DSi's new capabilities enable users to surf the web, chat online, listen to music and download applications (DSiWare) onto SD cards. And as well as offering internet browsing, the DSi features larger screens, a slimmer design and comes packed with two cameras – one found inside the inner hinge and the other embedded into its outer case. With the DSi's unparalleled functionality, it looks like Nintendo is further looking to revolutionise, redefine and shape the medium of portable gaming.

Homebrew Heroes

Released in 2001, and developed by South Korean electronics developer GamePark, the GP32 was an open-source system designed to appeal to aspiring game programmers. However, it still found itself beleaguered by the Game Boy Advance and a lack of commercial software releases. Following the release of the GP32, GamePark was split into two separate companies, GamePark and GamePark Holdings, and in 2005 GamePark Holdings released a successor. The GP2X continued the GP32's open-source functionality by utilising a new Linux-based operating system and being compatible with emulators, yet the machine still struggled to gain any notable support from established software developers. GamePark Holdings is now rumoured to be gearing up the release of a successor to the GP2X, called the 'Wiz', later in the year. The machine should benefit from greater commercial software support.

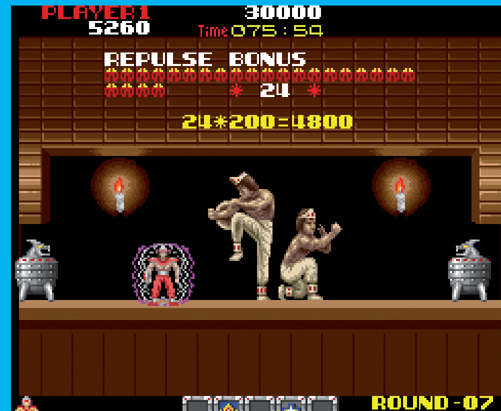


» The DS may have taken some flak early on in its life, but from the wall of scepticism a true successor to Nintendo's Game Boy eventually emerged.

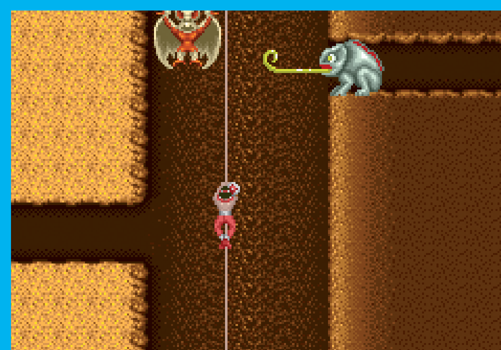
WHY YOU MUST PLAY...

RYGAR: THE LEGENDARY ADVENTURE

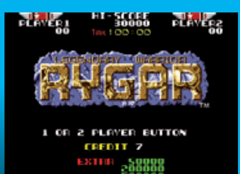

[Arcade] *Rygar's* a great game, but it's bloody taxing. Still, we're all grown-ups here so we should be able to hack it, right?



[Arcade] There are secrets galore to discover in the game… too many to put in this tiny little caption.


[Arcade] Occasionally, Rygar has to climb these ropes while avoiding the Red Arremer rip-off and a licking by these toads.

HE MIGHT SOUND LIKE A DEODORANT, BUT THANKS TO A WEAPON THAT LOOKED LIKE A GIANT YO-YO, THIS HIP-HOPPING HERO STARRED IN THREE ADVENTURES. BUT WHERE DID RYGAR'S ADVENTURE BEGIN?



IN THE KNOW

- **PUBLISHER:** TECMO
- **DEVELOPER:** TECMO
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- **GENRE:** SHOOTER
- **RELEASED:** 1986
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £70+

This 8-bit hero started his videogame tenure inside arcades back in 1986, when he appeared in a pretty arduous game about a dead warrior who was resurrected and tasked with vanquishing an army of creatures using something that looked like a giant pizza cutter. The game was a unique blend of a side-scrolling shmup and a platform game (very similar in feel to Irem's brilliant *Ninja Spirit*), and like typical Tecmo games it required both skill and a keen mastery of the controls to see anything dwelling past its opening stages.

Annoyingly, *Rygar* is fabled for being one of those arcade games that you can't buy your way to the end of. Like a git of a poker player who doesn't pay you the courtesy of letting you try and win your money back, upon reaching the 20th stage the game will take your cash, shut up shop and bar you from using any more continues, thus forcing you to finish the game with a single credit (this was actually quite a common thing during *Rygar's* conception, as any fan of *Shinobi* will openly profess). Regardless, it has become a moot point with fans of the game. And while many welcome it as a method of separating the men from the boys (and women from the girls), others saw it as an unfair means to pillage as much cash as possible. Nonetheless, one thing is certain: *Rygar* is a cruel mistress, and even if you could buy your way to her finish line you'd need pretty deep pockets to put this baby to bed. Had its action been nothing short of addictive we'd be trying to convince you that the heartache really isn't worth it.

So, it's at this point you might be wondering what exactly the game's about? Well, according to the intro text at the start of the game, *Rygar* is set 4.5 billion years since Earth's creation, explaining why most of the enemies in the game are rhinos, monkeys and sludge. Its story states that when an evil chap called Ligar takes over the peaceful land of Argool (known as Argus in the Japanese version), it falls to a dead warrior (desperate times and all that) named Rygar to put an end to his nefarious ways with a nifty yo-yo-looking weapon called the Diskarmor.

Seeing as he's been brown bread for a while, our Rygs hasn't had the time to perfect the art of yo-yoing, which explains why he only has two moves at his disposal. The first is your typical fling and recoil, which you'll be relying on for about 95

WHAT MAKES IT UNIQUE



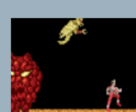
SHIT MONSTER
Okay, it's actually a lava monster, but you have to admit this creature (which crops up in stage four) shares an uncanny resemblance.



SOFT KILL SCREEN
After stage 19 you're on your own, with no extra continues; it's just you and the machine. Some argue that's exactly how it should be.



SECRETS
Rygar contains plenty of secrets to discover and finding them all isn't easy, or obvious. The game is quite a little score-attack affair.



DEATH
If you dawdle around and the timer runs out, you're ushered along by this giant monster called Death. As his name suggests, he's bad news.

INFLUENCES

The games that influenced and have been influenced by **Rygar**

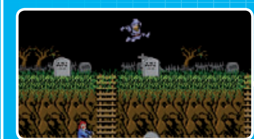


■ **FRAK** (1984) BBC MICRO
Well it's got a yo-yo-wielding caveman in it; the connection is as clear as day. Clearly Tecmo were fans of Nick Pelling's classic.



■ **NINJA SPIRIT** (1988) ARCADE
Another fantastic side-scrolling shooter, but this time from the makers of *R-Type*. It plays brilliantly.





■ **GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS** (1985) ARCADE
Capcom's wonderfully devilish ladders and lancing game is most certainly an inspiration for *Rygar*.



■ **CONTRA** (1987) NES
Bill and Lance may not have been directly influenced by *Rygar* but their constant running, jumping and firing might as well be.



■ **KUNG-FU MASTER** (1984) ARCADE
***Kung-Fu Master* might opt for fists over weapons, but there's clearly a sense of similarity.**



■ **ATOMIC RUNNER** (1988) MEGA DRIVE
Or *Chelnov*, as it was also known, was a punishing Mega Drive blaster that liked to push you over the edge.

> **"The game's mantra is clearly frantic action and keen reaction"**

per cent of the time, and the second is a manoeuvre that repeatedly circles the yo-yo weapon around the top of our hero to form a shield (a good defensive technique for players wanting to take their time and glean an impressive high score in the game).

Another great and often overlooked aspect of *Rygar* is that the game can be played in two ways: you can simply see it as a 27-stage gauntlet in which to run, or a brilliant multifaceted score-attack game with a ridiculous amount of hidden points to be awarded, secrets to be discovered, and special items to glean. *Rygar* comprises 27 rounds, each pretty short, and all find the player running, jumping and smiting horde after horde of ugly-looking prehistoric meanies. There are over 20 enemies in the game, varying from bats and demons to things that resemble the 'shit monster' from the film *Dogma*, and while many gamers might unfairly laugh off *Rygar's* level design and music for being a tad trite (there's very little deviation between the look of the stages other than adding the odd waterfall here or underground area there, and the music is almost non-existent), the game's mantra is clearly frantic action and keen reaction: essential qualities that are found in some of the very best arcade games ever created.

Sadly, the majority of the *Rygar* home conversions are disappointing, but for the NES port Tecmo pulled out all the stops. Despite being a very loose conversion of the original arcade game (the game feels like *RygaRPG*), it's still one of the best action-adventure games to ever grace the machine. Adding adventure elements and top-down sections, which come to mix things up rather nicely, it certainly gives NES owners plenty more bang for their buck. We also recommend fans of the series to seek out the excellent *Rygar: The Legendary Adventure* on PS2. This beautiful-looking follow-up might take *Rygar* in a PlayStation 2-friendly *God Of War* direction, but it really does build on the fist game brilliantly, adding new moves and even weapon upgrades.

Rygar is a classic game that actually paved the way for a wave of very similar and more successful titles. If you're a fan of the frenetic, heady-paced shooters, you should seek out this fantastic little game, chuck a credit in its mouth and see how far it gets you.

THE CONVERSIONS

How the various versions compare



1 NES

BEST VERSION

Not an uncommon thing for NES arcade ports, Tecmo completely rethought *Rygar* for its NES debut. The frenetic action was toned down and instead there's a more considered action/adventure approach to the game. A great, if somewhat controversial, conversion.



2 ATARI LYNX

The Lynx is a wonderful piece of kit that boasts some wonderful arcade conversions. And *Rygar* is one of them. It looks and plays brilliantly, with blown-up sprites filling the entirety of the screen. It feels less chaotic than the arcade version, but it's excellent nevertheless.



3 AMSTRAD CPC

The good old Amstrad pulls out a magnificent effort with its *Rygar* conversion. Clearly (and not because we're biased) this is clearly the best version out of the 8-bit micros. The game looks great, thanks to some tactile controls, and it plays great too. Nice one Arnold!



4 COMMODORE 64

We actually don't think this is a bad port at all. The game certainly looks and feels the part – it feels almost identical to the excellent CPC version, albeit slightly dour in looks and suffering from controls that don't feel as responsive. Not a bad conversion though.



5 MASTER SYSTEM

This version sadly never made it out of Japan, and there's a very good reason for that: it's not very good at all. The game might look the part, but like the NES port, the gameplay is tweaked slightly. The game adds underground sections that you need to traverse to finish the level.

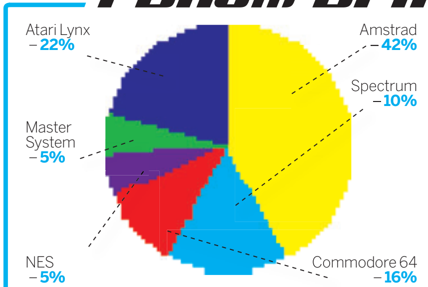


6 ZX SPECTRUM

WORST VERSION

Oh dear, usually the Spectrum shines when it comes to side-scrolling shooters, but sadly it doesn't pull it out of the bag this time. Ugliness and fart noises aside, our biggest issue with it is the poor controls – firing while jumping being particularly annoying.

FORUM OPINION

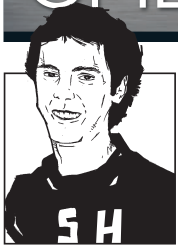


"It's Lynx for me. I liked it better than the Master System version due to the mention of it bringing up painful childhood memories."
– TwoHeadedBoy

"I'm an Amstrad fan but I've really got a soft spot for the Speccy conversion. It's as tough as old boots but it plays really well."
– gmintyfresh

CLASSIC GAMING ON A BUDGET

CHEAP AS CHIPS



If there's one thing we've learned about retro gaming, it's that your money can stretch an amazingly long way if you actually want it to. Granted, a mint copy of *Radiant Silvergun* is going to cost you a small fortune, but there are plenty of other worthy titles that can picked up for less than a fiver…

ALEX KIDD IN SHINOBI WORLD

- » **SYSTEM:** SEGA MASTER SYSTEM
- » **RELEASED:** 1990
- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** SEGA



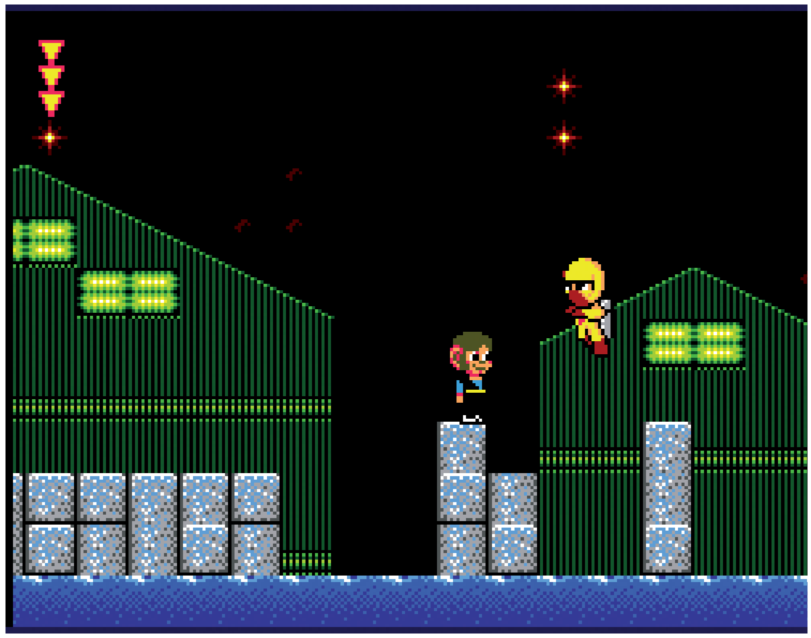
For this wonderful 8-bit mash-up on the Master System, Sega took its cute, stubby-looking mascot and injected him into the ultraviolent realm of *Shinobi*. And it was brilliant.

Originally titled *Shinobi Kidd*, *Alex Kidd In Shinobi World* (*AKISW*) started life with no association to Sega's big-fisted mascot at all. Sporting a grey outfit and blue headband, the look of the game's titular hero was originally planned to be more in-keeping with Joe Musashi's westernised look, and the game's first boss, Kobato, was going to be a cheeky send-up of Nintendo's popular mascot – he was called Mari-Oh, looked like Mario, had a moustache like Mario, and halfway through the fight he'd even shrink in size like Mario. But as the game edged closer to its release, the decision was taken (probably quite wisely) by Sega to drop the Nintendo goading and fuse the game with its own mascot instead. It proved a good move, as *AKISW* ranks as one of the best videogame outings for the young cauliflower-eared prince.

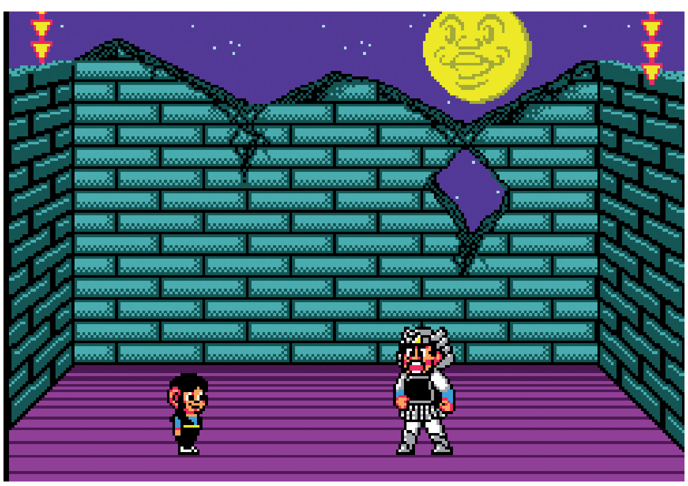
So what's the deal then? Well at the start of the game we see Alex sharing a tender moment with his blonde girlfriend (who also looks a little bit like a monkey), but the romance is soon spoiled when a mysterious cloaked assailant spins into view and kidnaps her. Reduced to tears, Alex is understandably left in turmoil – that is until the ghost of an angel dressed like a *Shinobi* ninja appears and enters his body, equipping him with awesome ninja powers needed to get the love of his life back, and beginning one of the greatest parodies in videogames.

Despite the obvious cosmetic changes the Alex Kidd fusion makes to the world of *Shinobi*, the gameplay does remain amazingly close to the side-scrolling ninja classic. Split up into four missions, each comprising three stages, the look of the game, various enemies and end-of-level guardians are all clever send-ups from the original arcade classic. There is a neat homage to both the Black Turtle and Mandara bosses, in the form of a flying frigate that spews out tiny little helicopters, and even Lobster makes a comical appearance in the form of a bipedal crustacean called Robster – it's all a bit silly really. Alex Kidd in his *Shinobi* form boasts an impressive array of powers, including a nifty move where he transforms into an indestructible fireball by swinging from a lamppost 50 times a second and a special attack where he can morph into a spinning tornado that allows him to traverse dangerous terrain. The visuals look great, and the soundtrack – an amazing remix of *Shinobi*'s excellent music – is almost guaranteed to get your feet tapping.

AKISW is a real treat for *Shinobi* and Alex Kidd fans, and if you're a fan of both Sega franchises then it's like having all your birthdays, Christmases and Easters come at once (kind of). And as the game can be picked up now for next to nothing, you should need no further excuse to seek out this awesome Master System classic.



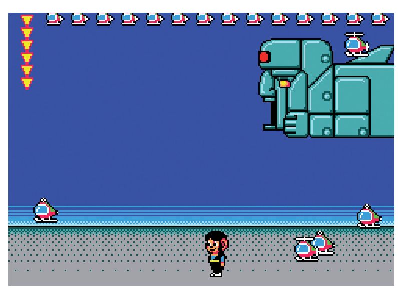
» (Master System) All of the levels take their inspiration from *Shinobi*, even bringing back those



» (Master System) Here's the first stage boss, Kobato. Originally, he was called Mari-Oh, and even looked like Nintendo's mascot.



» (Master System) A shot from the game's opening cut-scene. It may be short but it sets the scene brilliantly.



» (Master System) The second stage boss is a melding of two end-of-level guardians from *Shinobi*. Can you guess which ones?


It's a jungle out there. Swing through it
iPhone App Directory
Your guide to the best applications for iPhone & iPod touch
New for 2011
947
iPhone Games Directory
Your unmissable guide to iPad, iPhone and iPod games
iPad 2 App Directory
859
iPad
Kindle
Printed full colour large format book
Directory™
The definitive review listings for iPad, iPhone and Android apps
Also in this series
Bookazines
eBooks • Apps
www.imaginebookshop.co.uk
HIGH ST.
BUY IN STORE
High street
amazon
Kindle Store
ip
ImagineShop.co.uk
App Store

MANIC MINER
THE LOST LEVELS

THOUGHT YOU'D HEARD THE LAST OF MINER WILLY? RG'S SURBITON ARCHAEOLOGIST STUART CAMPBELL HAS DUG DOWN DEEPER THAN ANY MAN ALIVE, AND HE KNOWS DIFFERENT

Now, I know what you're thinking, dear RG reader. You're thinking, "OMFG *Manic Miner* again? There can't POSSIBLY be a single pixel, joke or assembly-language hexadecimal of code in that game that hasn't been documented to death and beyond by now!" Which just goes to show what YOU know about anything, so there.

Y'see, the problem is that everyone thinks of *Manic Miner* as a Spectrum game. Maybe at a pinch you might have encountered the more or less identical ports on the C64 or Amstrad, but it's a game that's quintessentially identified with the Speccy. And that fact obscures the fact that there were many other *Manic Miner*s, several of which added their own distinctive stamp to Matthew Smith's seminal original. (And that's leaving aside the superb SAM Coupe version, which effectively featured two entire separate sequels alongside the original 20 levels.)

The Acorn Archimedes version, for example, has a unique and helpful feature whereby if you die, the keys you've already picked up on that level stay collected. But much more interesting than that is the fact that several *MM* ports included extra levels not present in the Spectrum game, or which were radically different. When you add them all up, there's a whole new 20-level 'lost' *Manic Miner* out there. So why not join us now as we tell Miner Willy's untold story? Just what did happen between the moment he stepped back out from the mine into the daylight, and the point years later when we met him again in *Jet Set Willy*? Why did he turn so spectacularly to drink? And how DID he come to have a gateway to space hidden in the upper rooms of his mansion? Let's find out!



LEVEL 1
Home At Last Source: Oric

The opening scene in our story of the 'lost levels' features a depiction of Willy's house as seen on the original Spectrum *Manic Miner* game's title screen/final level. Having lost your keys somewhere in the mine, Willy has to make an unconventional entry via the roof following some perilous leaping around outside. A simple enough business, but has the house been secure in his absence? It seems not, since some very strange things have been going on inside…



LEVEL 2
The Airlock Source: Oric

On descending through the chimney into his house, Willy surprisingly finds himself not landing straight in the attic, but in an airlock that he doesn't remember building. Mystified, he avoids a sneaky but fairly obvious trap early on, and collects the keys to unlock the central door without too many problems. But the experience is unsettling, and he passes through with some trepidation.







LEVEL 3

Mummy Daddy **Source: GBA**

On entering what used to be his loft, Willy gets a nasty shock. Not only is the room in a state of decay, with platforms crumbling at the ends and forcing him to leap to the limits of his abilities, but his home appears to be infested with the undead! Yikes! Dodging some strange orbs and quickly gathering the keys, he unlocks the trapdoor and bolts down the ladder into the hall.

LEVEL 4

The Hall Of The Mountain Kong **Source: Oric**

Somehow the Kong Beast, already defeated twice on Willy's epic adventure, has returned and stomped so hard on the floors that most of the stairs have been either destroyed or left very rickety. The bear-like monsters of the Endorian Forest are also pouring out of the bathroom and heading straight for him. He better move… fast.

LEVEL 5

Back To Work

Source: Oric

Willy decides to head for his mine shaft. Much of the mine's outside structure has been destroyed and there's a whole new type of enemy here: while he's seen the strange yellow bird before in the caves, this one moves diagonally. He barely manages to duck under it to grab the last mine key, and leaps blindly into the shaft entrance.









LEVEL 6

The Dragon Users Bonus

Source: Dragon 32

A collapse appears to have diverted the entryway into a totally new cavern, barely illuminated by a few shafts of evening twilight. Tentatively he starts to explore the network of platforms so like those he thought he'd left behind forever, but something seems not quite right. While there are conveyor belts and ladders like those in the original mine, they seem to serve no purpose. Several mishaps, bumps and bruises later, Willy finds a doorway that he thinks should lead to the original Central Cavern.

LEVEL 7

Not Central Cavern

Source: Oric

But something's gone horribly wrong here. While the room Willy finds himself in LOOKS like the Central Cavern, whatever event wreaked havoc on the mine entrance has also caused disturbances here, including the ominous appearance of a switch that Willy hadn't noticed on his first visit. Many times he tumbles to painful injury where he'd expected to find safe footing, and it's a long time before the battered and bleeding pitman finally finds his way to the exit door with a pocketful of keys.

LEVEL 8

Down The Pit

Source: Oric

Unlocking the door to where he only half-expects to find the Cold Room, the intrepid miner has barely laid put his boot on the threshold when there's a sudden crack and the ground disappears beneath his feet. Plummeting through the floor, Willy finds himself looking at yet another new contraption – an escalator heading down into the gloomy depths. Almost despite himself he steps onto the moving stairway, instinctively knowing that there will be no going back up and that his only hope is to descend further still.

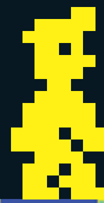
LEVEL 9

Metropolis Bingo

Source: GBA

Abruptly there is light as Willy enters the next cavern, revealing a hellish set of gigantic wall paintings of what may – Willy realises with a horrified gulp – be zombified miners, once like himself but now condemned to the underworld for eternity. Yikes! At first it seems like this place might indeed be some sort of collier's final graveyard, but on testing his long-jumping and quick-decision-making skills to the fullest, our brave explorer manages to stumble his way to an exit. Phew, what a relief.

MANIC MINER THE LOST LEVELS

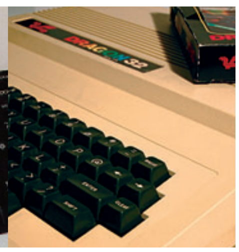


LET'S MAKE LOVE AND LISTEN TO DEATH FROM ABOVE

TO PLAY *MANIC MINER* – *The Lost Levels* you're going to have to put in a bit of effort, I'm afraid. Several years ago your reporter persuaded the Speccy coder responsible for the finest *Manic Miner* hack ever (*Manic Miner CSS*) to try to implement all 20 levels in a Speccy mod of the original. But with the coding underway and a two-level test version already running, tragically real life intervened and he was killed by a falling Skylab, or had some kids or something. Damn meddling kids.

So to enjoy the *MMTLL* experience you'll need to embark on an epic emulate-a-thon and play all the levels one at a time, noting your score for each one down with a pencil and paper before totalling it up, having it witnessed and signed by a respectable figure of authority (doctor, lawyer, policeman, hedge fund manager) and posting it by Recorded Delivery to Blue Peter. Hurry, though, they're about to cancel it.





ORIC

There don't seem to be any working dedicated Oric emus for Windows any more (Euphoric is a horrible piece of garbage that BSODs my PC without fail), but the multi-emulator MESS does a passable job. To play the Oric game for this feature, though, I actually used the rather good DS emu DSOric.

BBC MICRO

The splendid BeebEm is the best choice by far.

DRAGON 32

Dragon emulation isn't too tricky these days. If you don't mind wading through a lot of tiresome coder pomposity, Xroar is a pretty workable standalone Dragon emu, but the easiest option is probably MESS again.

GBA

You want Visual Boy Advance, unless you can find somewhere that still sells GBA games.

ARCHIMEDES

Virtual A5000 is an excellent and pretty easy-to-use Archie emulator.

AMSTRAD CPC

The best CPC emulator is WinApe.








LEVEL 10

At The Centre Of The Earth

Source: Oric

Grimly soldiering on, Willy finds yet more blasphemies against nature in the bowels of the Earth. Prehistoric-looking beasts prowl these subterranean passageways, and the soil above them appears loose and unstable. Sure enough, a small cabinet seems to have been sunk halfway through it already – deliberately, as some sort of elevator, if the moving walkway leading up to it is anything to go by. Willy gingerly climbs a tower of dirt to retrieve one of the keys and can't prevent a shiver of excitement as he unlocks the door.

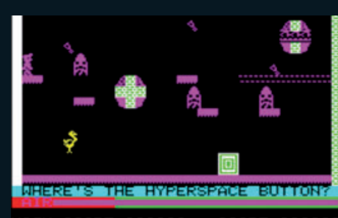


LEVEL 11

Eddie's Forest

Source: Archimedes

The door of the cab slides shut and the elevator erupts into life. Through tiny cracks, Willy can see the earth rushing past. With a final catastrophic bang, the mechanism jolts to a stop, twisted beyond repair. The air smells fresh and Willy squeezes out of the roof hatch to find himself in a forest! The area is riddled with similar shafts – some now inhabited by cavern monsters – and the ground is prone to collapse, but more worryingly there seems no way out of the forest except for another elevator a few yards away in a clearing.



LEVEL 16

Where's The Hyperspace Button?

Source: Oric

As Willy enters the cockpit, the shuttle makes the jump to lightspeed, leaving only a single purple security light to illuminate the handful of platforms. Their absence is explained by the alien creatures inhabiting the room who appear to have no need of solid surfaces, wearing anti-gravity belts that enable them to hover effortlessly in mid-air. As the craft begins to slow to a halt, Willy traverses a precarious path between the aliens and towards the exit hatch.



LEVEL 17

The Meteor Storm

Source: BBC Micro

Willy drops out of the shuttle into a scene reminiscent of the Skylab Landing Bay he'd seen what feels like a lifetime ago, except with meteors instead of Skylabs. The presence of electrified forcefields seems to confirm an interstellar world, but the extra-terrestrial explorer is relieved to notice a tiny ledge at the very extremity of each barrier, too small for the robots which patrol the area but just wide enough for him to stand on safely. A small building offers shelter from the asteroid onslaught, and Willy makes for it with all possible speed.



LEVEL 12

In A Deep Dark Hole

Source: Oric

With a sinking feeling, literally, the door closes and Willy immediately finds himself plunging into the planet's interior again. When the elevator doors open again (with a trademark wrenching of metal indicating that this is another one-way trip) he finds himself in near-total blackness. The only light comes from a door set high in the wall, and Willy has to feel his way towards it, standing on – and sometimes leaping in blind faith towards – platforms he can't even see. He falls many times before reaching the doorway.



LEVEL 13

The Channel Tunnel

Source: Oric

To Willy's horror, the cavern on the other side of the door seems to have suffered a total cave-in. Moving walkways beneath his feet are still running, but lead only onto jagged shards of metal debris. Our hero has to improvise a path through the shifting piles of earth, clambering up to reach keys only to have the ground give way again beneath his feet. Caked in mud, he painstakingly treks his way for what seems like miles before gratefully encountering another elevator, which he somehow knows will rocket towards the surface again.



LEVEL 14

Tokyo Uh Oh

Source: GBA

Stumbling out of the elevator, Willy emerges in downtown Tokyo, which seems to have suffered an apocalyptic attack. Skyscrapers in the process of collapse jut from the ground at crazy angles, and almost everywhere Willy steps crumbles underneath him. Sitting atop the rubble of a fallen tower block, he spots what looks like a spacecraft. A human escape ship, or part of an invading alien armada? Dodging squid-like creatures like those seen on his first mining mission, Willy climbs aboard to seek answers just as the engines fire.



LEVEL 15

The Space Shuttle

Source: Oric

As the space shuttle tears itself free of city debris and breaks out of planet Earth's gravity, Willy just manages to grab a key as the floor falls away, leaving himself looking around at the shuttle's badly damaged interior. Our intrepid adventurer soon spies a door which looks as if it might lead to the craft's cockpit, but in this instance keys alone won't be enough to open it. Searching the precarious interior of the shuttle, Willy manages to locate two security switches and the door glides open with a hiss.



LEVEL 18

The End Source: Dragon 32

The building is a trap! The doorway opens straight onto a collapsing floor, but Willy leaps to safety at the last moment. Phew! Panic grips him when he sees that his escape leaves him no apparent way of reaching the only exit, but in a flash of inspiration he recalls that many of the creatures he's met appeared, strangely, to resemble the videogame character Pac-Man…



LEVEL 19

The Final Barrier Source: BBC Micro

Save for more electrified forcefields, this place looks just like the caverns Willy battled through in the long trial before his ill-fated return to his Surbiton home. Time and again he follows false trails, avoids deadly mining robots and tries to reach keys, but finally a mysterious portal is at hand. Recognising the Omega symbol for the end of things, Willy passes through the gateway.



LEVEL 20

This, folks, is the Last Cavern! Source: Amstrad CPC

Willy surveys a scene almost identical to the final chapter in his previous adventure. A closer examination reveals a danger-filled new area where he expected his house to be. Dare he hope that his third trip through an Omega portal will be the last? Can he yet dream of a return home, to trade in his treasures? Only time will tell…

THE MAKING OF…

JOUST

Joust was a surreal mix of flight combat, fantasy and beautifully realised physics. Designer John Newcomer recounts the unusual tale of its inception, while Mike Bevan is buzzard bait



IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHERS:** WILLIAMS ELECTRONICS

» **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE

» **CONVERSION PLATFORMS:** ATARI 2600, 5200, 7800, ATARI 8-BIT, ATARI ST, LYNX, NES

» **RELEASED:** 1982

» **GENRE:** FLAP-'EM-UP

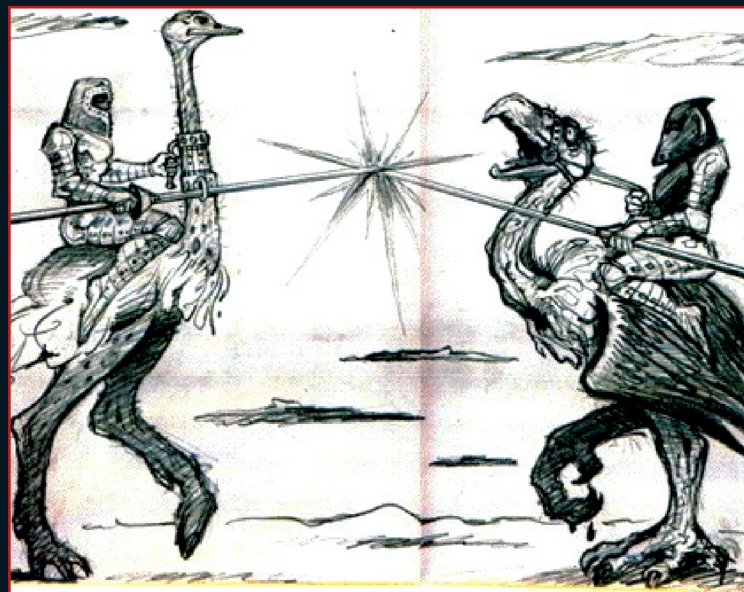
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £400+ (UPRIGHT CABINET), £500+ (COCKTAIL)

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** DEFENDER (1980), STARGATE (1981), ROBOTRON: 2084 (1982)



»[Arcade] Due to its enhanced hardware's increased memory and colour palette, *Joust 2* featured a far greater level of background detail than its predecessor.

» An example of Python Anghelo's *Joust* concept art, featuring ostrich and buzzard and their riders.



"I think in the movie, Flash Gordon, there was a civilisation that rode on birds," muses John Newcomer, discussing his influences. Better than the fact that for once an Eighties videogame seems inspired by a sci-fi flick other Star Wars, it's great to hear that the spirit of the late great Freddie Mercury somehow made its way into the world of classic arcade games.

And while many would credit the output of Eugene '*Defender*' Jarvis as legendary arcade manufacturer Williams' finest hour, John can lay claim to creating one of the company's most remarkable and well-loved titles. With its bizarre medieval setting, ostrich-mounted knights, evil buzzard-riders and eerie arena of floating rock, *Joust* (in tandem with its lesser known sequel) remains truly unique among its peers. But what really set the game apart from other coin-ops of the period was its stunning recreation of Newtonian mechanics. As much as squaring up against its raptor-mounted bad guys, and governed by judicious use of its 'flap' button, *Joust* was equally about fighting gravity itself

It was during his time as a toy and game inventor in Chicago that John became fascinated by the new breed of electronic entertainment emerging in the US. "I lived close to 'Mothers' arcade which was one of the most important testing grounds for arcade games in the country, and I played everything that came in," he recalls, citing *Space Invaders*, *Galaxian* and *Centipede* as "major addictions" at the time. "I had already worked on handheld toy equivalents of these arcade games, and using LEDs or light bulbs with vellum overlays was just not as satisfying as the real thing… games with colour animation. This was clearly the future."

Attracted to Williams because of the company's proximity, and the obvious experimental freedom enjoyed by its internal designers, John's timing couldn't have been better. Following the huge success of *Defender*, Eugene Jarvis and Larry DeMar had recently left to form Vid Kidz, and Williams was keen to source fresh talent. "My background as a designer tasked with generating a constant flow of ideas for a toy company seemed ideal for their needs at the time," says John. "I had given Ken Fedesna [Williams' VP of Engineering] and Software Manager Paul Dussault my resumé rolled up inside a rubber chicken as a test to see if they had a sense of play and humour that would be an environment for creativity. Apparently everyone found what they were looking for…"

John's initial responsibilities were to generate new game ideas to support the internal development staff. "One of my first tasks was to create what they called a 'Treasure Chest' of ideas that could be selected as programmers were available and some teams could be formed," he explains. "I took a couple days to list out some very rough idea germs that had potential. My two favourites were *War Of The Worlds* and *Joust*. Williams simply did not have the technology at the time to do *War Of The Worlds* anywhere close to what I would envision so it would have to sit on the shelf. *Joust* could be done using their current hardware and warehouse full of joysticks."

"The successful flying games were ones with spaceships, like Defender and Asteroids"

Teaming up with programmer Bill Pfutzenreuter and pixel artist Jan Hendricks, John's plan was to hijack Williams' existing *Defender* hardware for the project. But rather than follow the template of Eugene Jarvis's celebrated debut, John wanted to veer off on a tangent. "The core of *Joust* was to make a flying game," he says. "The successful flying games were ones with spaceships, like *Defender* and *Asteroids*. Nothing resonated in the industry that could appeal to the vast population of players who shared the common dream of wishing they could fly, but were tired of only being able to manifest that fantasy in a spaceship."



THE MAKING OF... JOUST

THE DELICATE SOUND OF FLAPPING

GIVEN THE RESTRICTIONS of the hardware, John Newcomer is rightly proud of *Joust*'s aural qualities, which hold up admirably next to Williams arcade brethren like *Defender* and *Robotron*. "John Kotlarik and Tim Murphy worked on the sounds," he says. "I cannot describe what a talent these guys had for making sounds using the caveman tools of the day. The technology was really only capable of making beeps and boops. I told them the most important sound in the game was to make a realistic wing flap sound. After John said it was impossible, he stewed on it and made it happen.

"Memory was very tight on the game and sounds are hogs. We had to limit to the most important ones and to me the bread and butter had to be those that reinforced gameplay: wing flap, pop for a defeated rider, egg hatch, transporter, bounce for tied collision, and pterodactyl. Each was instructive and designed to get the player's attention when they needed to consider an action that might change their play pattern. We also had the lava bubble sound, and the skid stop to reinforce Bill's idea to have the bird skid to a stop like in a *Road Runner* cartoon. That sound was just plain fun."





» The rare cocktail version of *Joust*. "This was a lot of effort for little return," says John. "Cocktail cabinet sales at all coin-op manufacturers were falling off, so the demand was low. It had to fit two people on the same side – in most table games, players took turns so the software had to flip the screen. Our advantage was we could use the exact same ROMs for either cabinet."

"I quickly made a list of everything that could fly, from planes to Da Vinci contraptions, squirrels, vampires, superheroes, birds and so on. Then I started listing the pros and cons of each." A self-confessed comic-book fan, John discloses that the superhero idea was a close runner-up, ultimately losing out due to what he perceived as a lack of appeal to female players. "Birds were the best fit as I was familiar with a lot of science fiction and fantasy movies and books where people had wings or flew on top of a bird or winged-creature," he explains. "For *Joust*, I specifically remember looking at a lot of mythology books at the library."

The decision to theme the game around humans mounted on mythical feathered charges led directly to *Joust*'s radical departure from the standard eight-way arcade control system. "My one light bulb idea was the 'flap' button," John admits. "By making the player press the button each time the wings flapped, and making them control speed in such a direct manner, I was able to strengthen the emotional connection between the player and the character they controlled." In fact, the decision to replace the standard fire button with the enigmatic 'flap' system in a game devoid of any shooting whatsoever was a huge gamble. The result would likely be totally different from any of the popular coin-ops already out there.

"At the time *Joust* was done I was hoping to get a broader audience who may want to try a different skill," explains John. "There were already plenty of shooting games they could play. I wanted to break some new ground. I felt I was already giving the player new things to do like having to flap, run and become so adept at flying that it would be the determining factor in how you collided and defeated an enemy. The cleanest thing I could think of to visually determine a winner was height."

This spark of inspiration led John to devise some clear predefined 'rules' for the game. Despite players having a great spike of a lance poking out in front of their super-ostrich mount, enemies could only be defeated by gaining enough height through mashing the flap button then ramming them from above. Equal-height collisions would cause both parties to ricochet off each other, while lower height collisions by the player would result in a loss of life. Defeated combatants deposited eggs which, if not collected from the play-field in time, would spawn evil knights which could climb aboard passing rider-less buzzards and re-enter the game – unless the player was deft enough to catch them from dismounted targets in mid-air.

With these rules in place, the next task was to prepare the combat arena, and John explains why the team opted for *Joust*'s platform-strewn static screen, rather than the scrolling of Williams' previous smash hit. "The hardware we had at the time would have had difficulty displaying the textured ledges [*Defender* and *Stargate* drew the backgrounds with software]," he says. "For a first game it felt better to allow the player to see everything they had to deal with." The final touch was the addition of the pool of molten lava at the base of the screen, and the disembodied arm of the 'lava troll' that would grab and destroy any unwary player that flew too low.

» A promotional poster created by Python Anghelo.







“The enemies… had to be something recognisably evil. Buzzards were the clear choice”

As for the unlikely choice of an ostrich for the player's heroic steed, John is unapologetic. “For the good guys the logical choice was something majestic like an eagle. The problem with that is an eagle does not have land capability. It no longer looks graceful. It was far easier to make the fantasy leap and say these ostriches were specially bred for combat, from a genetic line that had strong wings and could fly.” Because *Joust* was intended as one of the first simultaneous two-player co-operative arcade games, a second playable character was also required – player two's 'stork'. “I was never happy with the stork,” John admits. “The decision had more to do with having a bird that could be made in similar proportions as the ostrich, with a colour that was instantly recognisable to make sure players were not confused who they were on the screen. I always imagined them more as albino ostriches…”

For the enemies, the decision was made to use vultures (or buzzards) for the main waves. A second enemy, the 'unbeatable' pterodactyl, only appears when players take too long to clear a wave, in a role similar to the 'Baiters' of *Defender*. “Actually in my twisted brain this was logical and a pretty easy decision,” chuckles John. “I listed all the types of birds. The enemies were easy. They had to be something recognisably evil. Buzzards were the clear choice. Originally I had thought they would be grey but Jan proved a better solution was to use green. It made better strategic use of the limited 15-colour palette [for foreground and background combined]. It made the birds more colourful, easy to see and entertaining.”

Artist Jan Hendricks fared valiantly in squeezing the required graphics and character animation into the hardware's paltry 96K of memory, while retaining the game's visual quality and surreal charm. “Jan searched for references of ostriches in motion and found it in the animator's bible of the time, *Animals In Motion* by Eadweard Muybridge,” reveals John. “I was very sceptical that birds could be done realistically and had thought the characters would need to look somewhat cartoon. Jan proved everyone wrong.

“The hardest part was limiting the number of frames to keep the realistic look without using up all our sparse memory. Each frame was a struggle in trade-offs until we had to release. If I

» **[Arcade]** Left alone too long, eggs produce enemy riders, colour-coded to denote their rank. Here we see red Bounder riders, and a grey Hunter. Best grab that grey one pronto…

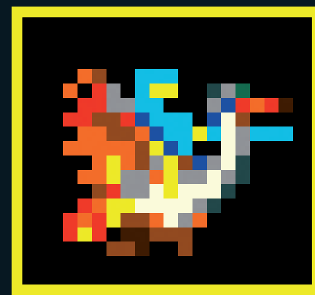


THE CAST OF JOUST

Thy Heroes



Ostrich



Stork

Ye Baddies



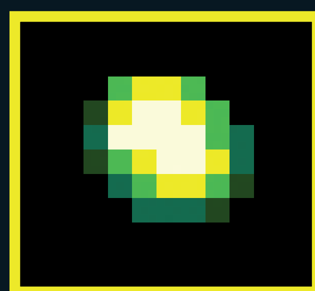
Bounder – 500 points



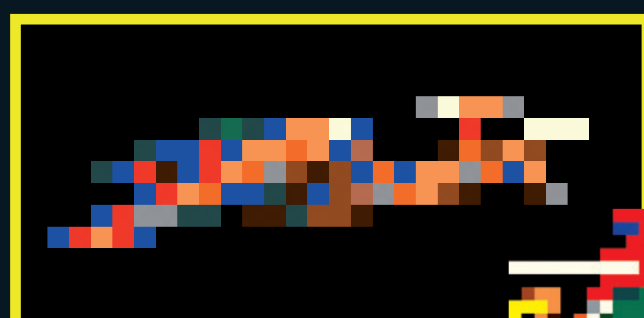
Hunter – 750 points



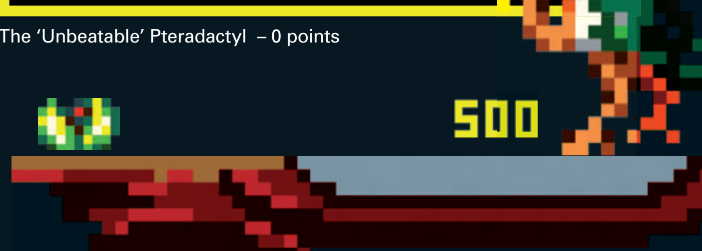
Shadow Lord – 1,500 points



Eggs – 250-1,000 points



The 'Unbeatable' Pteradactyl – 0 points

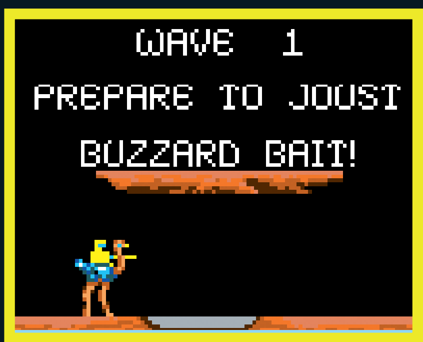


THE MAKING OF...

JOUST

JOHN NEWCOMER'S JOUST TIPS

Battle advice from the Joust-meister himself



THE KEY TO WINNING is not to panic and anticipate when you need to flap up. Ledges factor into the AI, and when the middle ledge is removed there is nothing to slow down the enemy upward speed. The numbers of enemies can catch you in a cross-fire at the angles of their attacks. The best thing is to master flapping to hover in place. Also, you need to master hovering along the top of the screen so you do not dip down. The tough enemies are seeking you and are not inclined to have irregularities in their flap so you will most likely lose when you collide. Using the ledges as cover is important because there is more bounce when the enemy hits underneath the rock. If you hover consistently at the top, the enemy is likely to bounce down a couple pixels, putting you in the upper position to win in a collision. Sitting under the ledges and waiting for the birds to come to you only works for so long. You are forced out of your play pattern if you don't catch eggs in the air and take so long that the pterodactyl seeks you out.



» [GBA] John's prototype Game Boy Advance update would have featured multi-directional scrolling, a more detailed main character, and the possibility of dismounting from the bird. Sadly it was never officially sanctioned by Midway.

had more memory I would have liked to put in additional characters, or given more meaning to the lava troll."

"When the colour palette locked, I finalised all the cliffs and ledges," continues John, moving on to the game's basic but uncannily effective enemy intelligence. "This was a task I considered to be level design and I was pretty fussy about getting the vertical and horizontal spacing just right. Each ledge was strategically placed to maximize Bill's flying code and the speed of the AI buzzards, with their attack patterns created partly by the placement of the ledges. It worked a bit like water behaves when it meets the resistance of rocks near the shore."

Taking a leaf from *Defender* and its multiple enemy behaviours, the team was keen to create a hierarchy of increasingly savvy buzzard foes as the waves progressed. The first two types encountered are the lowly Bounders, which essentially blunder around the scenery, bouncing off ledges, occasionally noticing your presence; and Hunters, which are programmed to actively seek the player. Finally, players will come up against the notoriously hard to defeat and fast-flying Shadow Lords. "Each rider type had a slightly different tendency," says John. "Shadow Lords got tough because they would seek high ground especially when in proximity to the player. The result was when they are close to you they fly up sharply. Factoring the speed of the flap and drift between flaps, it created a high probability of them hitting the player at an angle when they were higher than you."

Happily for John and his team, arcade-goers embraced the unusual control system, driving sales and providing Williams with an unexpected hit that provided a welcome, arguably more cerebral alternative to *Defender*. Some players, however, quickly noticed a loophole in the game's code that John admits left him "beating my head against the wall because it was a stupid mistake." This being the infamous so-called 'pterodactyl bug', which exploited the undocumented ability to kill the creature by lancing it in the mouth at a precise moment during its animation cycle.

"Bill and I had adjusted the pterodactyl so the attack path made a severe uplift at the last moment which would kill anyone who tried to use a strategy of just standing on a ledge to kill the bird," he explains. "Then, a day before the game shipped, the pterodactyl art was tweaked to improve the look. I was not aware the frame with the open mouth had shifted one pixel, and should have checked it. One pixel is all it took for players to be able to just stand on the centre ledge and let the creature skewer itself, giving the player a perpetual 1,000 points. We had to make a quick fix and issue updated ROMs to give to the distributors of the game immediately."



» [Arcade] Take too long to defeat your opponents and you'll incur the wrath of the pterodactyl, which hunts you relentlessly until the wave is completed. A glitch that made it defeatable was soon fixed.

THE BUZZARD STRIKES BACK

Despite improved hardware, Joust 2 achieved only a fraction of the success of the original game



JOUST'S ILL-FATED sequel was the result of a request from Williams for a kit conversion that could be used with upright monitors – the most common at the time due to the popularity of *Pac-Man*. "We all thought the best chance at selling a kit was to make a sequel," explains John. The vertical screen allowed extra height for swooping down on enemies, while a 'transform' button let players switch forms between the ostrich and the heavier but more powerful Pegasus. *Joust 2* had 35 distinct screens sporting Escher-influenced backgrounds and new enemies (such as the bats, and the boss-like Robot Knight) and was much tougher than its predecessor.



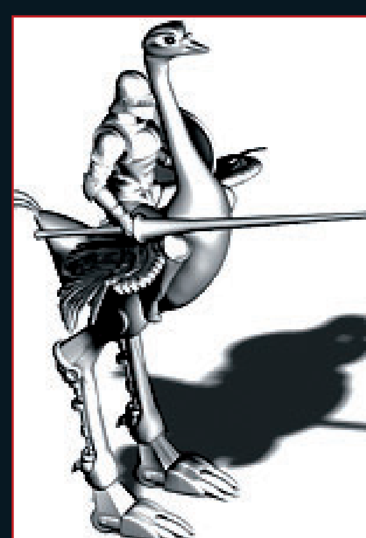
"The Pegasus provided a little variety in tactics for the player to get out of tough situations and win those head-on collisions on land," says John. "The giant robot was to put more into the villain progression." He admits he's not as happy with the game design as he was with the original, due to certain restrictions of the vertical format. "I shouldn't have done it under those limitations," he says. "*Joust* play mechanics work for a horizontal monitor or could work if the screen scrolled in all directions. Vertical affected reaction time, and the effect of AI attacks. There are some good things about it, but I could have done a better job pushing the tools I had."

> "It took some risks, had a basis in good design structure… and used strategy differently"

Despite this minor 'fowl-up', the overall success of the game led to Williams green-lighting a sequel. The result was *Joust 2: Survival Of The Fittest*, which hit arcades three years later, in the aftermath of the mid-Eighties games crash. Despite building on the solid design of the original, it shipped less than a thousand units, in comparison to *Joust*'s 26,000. A similar fate befell the *Joust* pinball game created by Williams to tie in with the original videogame's release. "I wasn't too much of a fan as it was designed to be primarily a two-player game which addressed a very small sliver of potential customers," comments John. "*Joust* would have been much better as a single-player-focused pinball machine where you had to bump targets and collect eggs before they hatched."

Recently, John has toyed with the idea of various console and portable updates (revealing a promising design prototype he created for the Game Boy Advance) and even a movie. "I am very proud of the original *Joust*," he states. "It took some risks, had a basis in good design structure, tried to expand in a different art style for the time, had two-player simultaneous play, and used strategy differently than previous games." He remains grateful to the management at Williams who allowed him to pursue his vision so completely, something he's fairly sure would never have happened in today's corporate-led development climate.

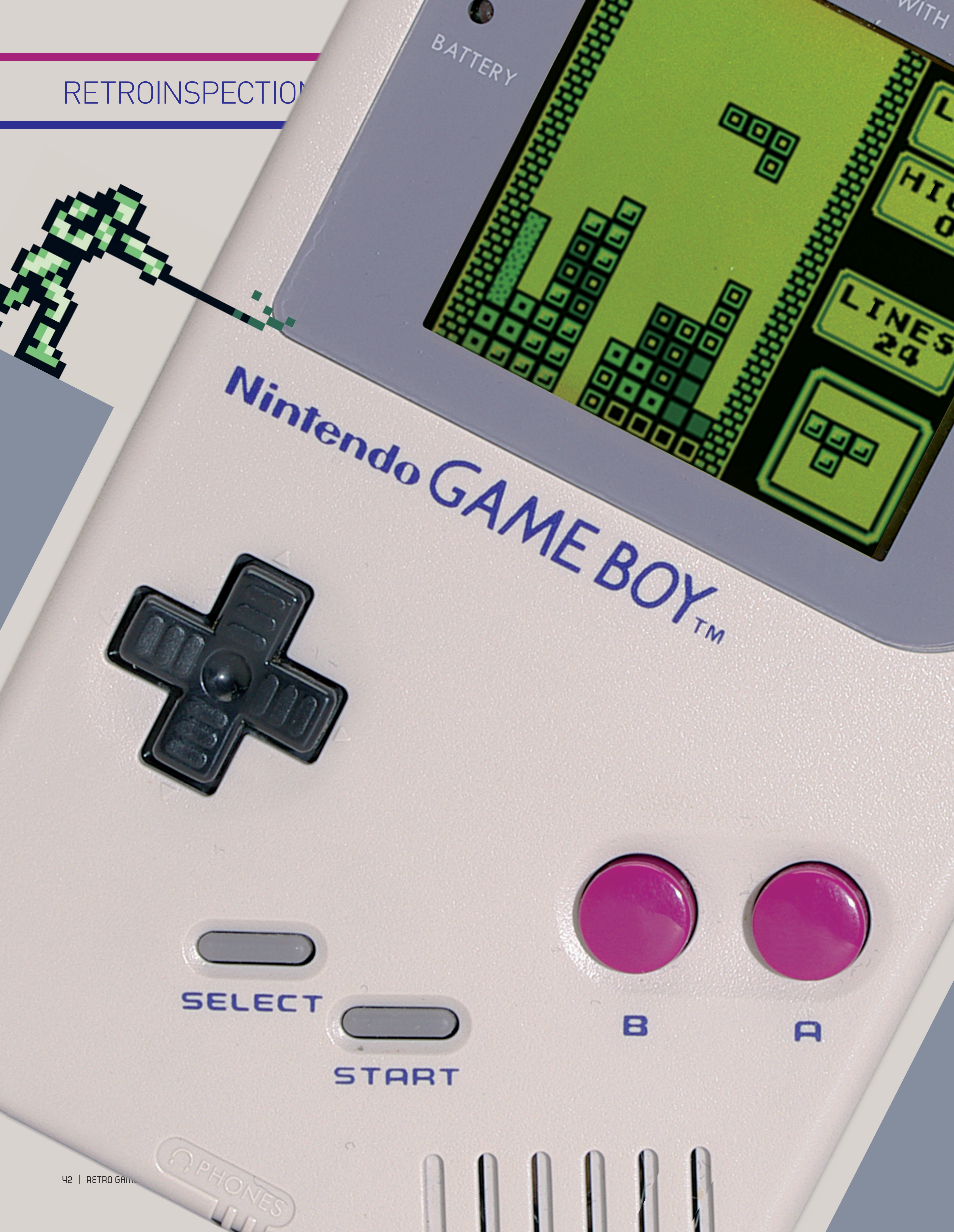
"What was extraordinary was that Ken and Paul were always supportive and shielded the team as much as possible," he says. "They just wanted us to focus on getting the job done in the time-frame. Williams president, Mike Stroll, could have at any time pulled the plug, but didn't. Think about that. You are in the top management of the company. You have a new guy in charge of a game that is bending a lot of rules, making something that is not similar to the previous big successes in the company. Industry advisors and experts are telling you the game is not going to do well because there's no shooting and various other reasons. You hold the jobs of a big manufacturing line in your hands. Yet they continue to let this new guy and untried team finish the game and see what happens. That took guts. Looking back, as much of a rebel as I have been from time to time in my career, I don't know if I could have taken that risk. I thank Mike, Ken and Paul for giving myself, Bill and the rest of the team that opportunity."



» A 3D render created for John's proposed Game Boy Advance incarnation of *Joust*.



» A concept for the buzzard created by Python Anghelo, who later became famous for his pinball machine artwork.


BATTERY
LINES
24
Nintendo GAME BOY TM
SELECT
START
B
A
PHONES



During the early Nineties, portable gaming was dominated by an unassuming monochrome console. **Damien McFerran** fires up his copy of Tetris and attempts to uncover the story behind one of Nintendo's most significant hardware releases

GAME BOY

The origins of this seminal console can be traced back to one of Nintendo's early portable successes – the Game & Watch range. Created by assembly line engineer turned design guru Gunpei Yokoi and his highly talented team at Nintendo Research and Development 1, the pioneering line of LCD handheld games showcased basic technology but utilised it in innovative ways, ensuring mass appeal and gaining its manufacturer mountains of cash in the process. Yokoi concocted the idea of 'Lateral Thinking of Withered Technology', a design philosophy which focused on using inexpensive and familiar components in new and interesting ways. This model would carry through to Yokoi's next project, which would make the success enjoyed by the Game & Watch series look almost inconsequential by comparison.

By the time the Eighties were drawing to a close, Nintendo's standing in the videogame industry was impressive; the NES had single-handedly saved the world console market from extinction following the cataclysmic crash of '83 and the aforementioned Game & Watch range was still shifting a highly respectable number of units. However, Yokoi knew that the technology behind these LCD games was starting to look outdated when placed alongside the experiences offered by the NES and other 8-bit home computers, so he began his quest to create a successor. As was the case with the Game & Watch, this new machine wouldn't use revolutionary features to get itself noticed. Yokoi's design beliefs were too strong; he knew that if he tried to create a console that was at the cutting edge of technology, it would be expensive and therefore lack mass market appeal. Instead he looked at building a device that was economical to manufacture and perfectly suited for its purpose – mobility.

This new console was shown in prototype form in 1987 and would later be demoed at various trade shows. The effect it had on the development community was electrifying. "It was really pretty amazing and exactly what we needed," says Rare's Paul Machacek, who coded the fantastic Game Boy title *Donkey Kong Land* and still works within the firm as a Program Manager. "We had expectations about a handheld gaming system when Rare founder Tim Stamper went to Consumer Electronics Show in the US, but he returned with news about a completely different handheld gaming system. This was in the days before the internet and you couldn't just pick up the latest photos and news from the show floor on websites like today. I can't remember whether we had to wait for a monthly magazine or got something shipped from Japan, but the first time I saw a Game Boy I just thought it looked like a little arcade cabinet in your pocket."

This new machine inherited one vitally important design aspect from its ancestor the Game & Watch – an 8-way

COMMUNITY GAME BOY SITES TO WATCH

Euro-Asia Game Boy

http://www.eagb.net/gameboy/index.html

Although sadly no longer updated, this site is well worth a look if you're after reviews and news relating to both the original Game Boy and its colour sibling. Staffed by Game Boy fans from all over the globe, it offers a truly international perspective on Nintendo's beloved handheld.



LittleSoundDJ Workshop

http://www.gieskes.nl/lsdj/

This is an ingenious homebrew music application that turns your humble 'breeze block' handheld into a fully fledged sound studio. Developed by the super-talented Johan Kotlinski in 2000, it's still being worked on now and also functions on the Game Boy Color and Game Boy Advance.



Nintendo Life

www.nintendolife.com

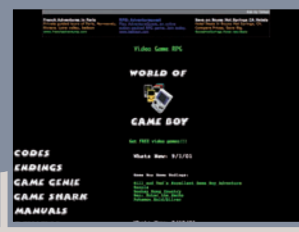
Although it's not strictly focused on the Game Boy itself, this is an excellent one-stop resource for all things Nintendo, including some excellent retro-themed features relating to the company's past exploits. The site's retro section is expanding too, so expect more stuff in the future.

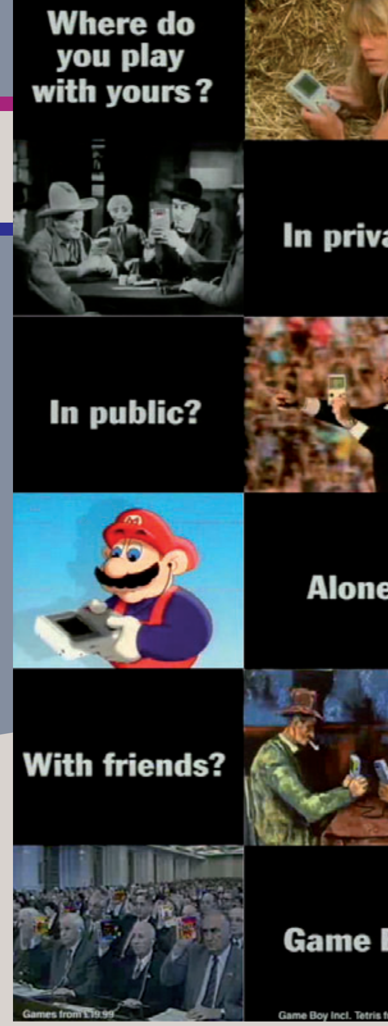


World of Game Boy

http://www.world-of-video-games.com/gb/game_boy.shtml

Again, this is another fan site that hasn't been updated in a while but it's handy if you're after some Game Boy-related information. There's a section that showcases game endings and also some neat tips and tricks if you happen to be hopelessly stuck on a particular game.







digital pad, or 'D-pad' as it's more commonly known as. We take this interface for granted now but it was Yokoi and his team at R&D1 that developed the concept; sensing that joysticks would impinge on a handheld's mobility, Yokoi concocted the D-pad – a flat controller that wouldn't protrude from the casing of any handheld it was applied to. The concept also found its way onto the NES, where it was equally successful. The NES in turn influenced other aspects of the Game Boy interface – the familiar A and B buttons were present, along with the 'Select' and 'Start'. This shared control method was beneficial in two ways: it allowed NES owners (and there were plenty of them) to effortlessly pick up the play this shiny new portable, and it also made it easy to port popular NES franchises to the machine.

As the Japanese release date approached, Nintendo confessed that it had high hopes for the device; president Hiroshi Yamauchi confidently predicted that it would sell over 25 million in the first three years – quite a bold claim, for the time. There might have been quite a few people that scoffed at such optimism, but when the machine effortlessly sold 300,000 units in its first day on sale in Japan in 1989, such scepticism seemed foolishly misplaced. It was painfully obvious that Nintendo – and Yokoi – had struck gold once again.

Software played a massive role in this victory and no game is more significant in shaping the Game Boy's history than the ultra-addictive puzzle title *Tetris*, created by Russian programmer Alexei Pajitnov. Although this legendary title was already widely available on PC at the time, its appearance on the Game Boy is arguably the reason why it is remembered so fondly today. CEO of Nintendo of America, Minoru Arakawa witnessed a demonstration of the puzzler at a trade show in 1988 and moved quickly to ensure that *Tetris* would become the Game Boy's first 'killer app'. It was included as a pack-in title in every region except Japan and would become instrumental in cementing the console's reputation as a 'must-have' gadget in the US, where the initial shipment of one million consoles sold out within a matter of weeks.

As was the case with the Game & Watch, the Game Boy used LCD technology, but instead of static images it boasted a 'dot-matrix' screen and could therefore display 160 by 144 individual pixels. It was monochrome, lacked lighting and could only display four different shades of grey, but it is unquestionably one of the reasons why the console was such an enormous success. It meant that the machine was incredibly energy efficient by the standards of the time, and although it's rumoured that several of Nintendo's executives put pressure on Yokoi to adopt a more visually impressive colour screen, his approach was ultimately vindicated when rival manufacturers released their full-colour, backlit portable machines onto the market shortly after Nintendo's handheld launched; battery life was dismal and this factor undoubtedly helped the Game Boy to win the war. "Kids hate replacing batteries; it requires having to ask your parents for something," chuckles Dylan Cuthbert, former Argonaut employee and Managing Director of Q-Games. "The longer a machine can run, the more people enjoy themselves and want to play more games on it."

> **"Battery life helped the Game Boy to win the war"**

However, while it was easy on power consumption, the Game Boy's simple screen wasn't adored by everyone and even at the time there were rumblings of discontent over its blurriness. Fast-moving objects were incredibly hard to see, which made some games difficult to play. "You didn't want lots of the screen to have a lot of detail that was moving continuously," explains Rare's Chris Sutherland. "It meant keeping the backgrounds plainer or ensuring there were pauses in the scrolling. Objects like bullets had to be made larger, or with significant outlines so that players could more easily spot them." This problem was amplified by the fact that the screen functioned best when viewed in direct light; to tackle this problem a wide variety of bolt-on peripherals were developed that not only added light sources but also magnified the display. The usefulness of such devices was questionable at best; when installed they rendered the Game Boy distinctly un-portable.

More software followed, with early hits such as *Super Mario Land*, *Baseball*, *Castlevania II: Belmont's Revenge* and *Contra* helping to keep interest in the console high. Just had been the case with the 8-bit NES, the Game Boy enjoyed a superlative degree of third-party support with all of the big names in the industry backing the console with their software. Konami, Square, Capcom, Irem and Hudson – as well as plenty of other publishers and developers – all pledged to support Nintendo. This resulted in an avalanche of software and made it very hard for rivals like Atari and Sega to gain a foothold, despite their more technically powerful Lynx and Game Gear hardware.

As the years rolled by, the popularity of the Game Boy remained buoyant while rival handhelds fell by the wayside. This success was no doubt assisted by quality games such as *The Legend Of Zelda:*

INFORMATION

Year released: 1989

Original price: £69.99

Buy it now for: £5

Associated magazines: GB Action, C&VG Go! supplement, Mean Machines, Nintendo Magazine System

Why the Game Boy was great… It offered true portability in an era when manufacturers were seemingly falling over themselves to produce battery-hungry behemoths that required you to carry a power supply with you at all times. With excellent support from practically every software publisher on the face of the planet, the Game Boy effortlessly overcame its monochrome shortcomings to become one of the most successful pieces of videogame hardware the world has ever seen



» With the Game Boy, you could now play your games anywhere, alone or with friends.



» An advert for Irem's Game Boy conversions of *R-Type* and *Kung Fu Master*.



» This Game Boy was owned by a US soldier and damaged in the Gulf War, yet it still continues to function and is on display at the Nintendo World Store in New York.



Link's Awakening, *Super Mario Land II*, *Donkey Kong Land* and *Metroid II: Return Of Samus*. However, it was the Japanese release of the first *Pokémon* title in 1996 that catapulted the Game Boy into hitherto uncharted realms of commercial triumph. Sadly this second wind was something of a double-edged sword for the monochrome marvel. It resulted in Nintendo looking into successors for the aging hardware (although without Yokoi's help – he had left the firm in disgrace after the failure of the Virtual Boy and would later meet a tragic end in a road traffic accident), and the first baby steps were made with the Game Boy Pocket in the same year that *Pokémon* made its Japanese debut.

Essentially a scaled-down version of the machine that boasted a sharper screen and ran on two AAA batteries, the Game Boy Pocket revitalised hardware sales and was a much-needed aesthetic update which kept the console relevant in the increasingly fashion-conscious PlayStation era. However, another upgrade wasn't far off and this time Nintendo would enhance the concept far more convincingly – the Game Boy Color delivered the bright and attractive visuals that fans had been clamouring for since the early Nineties and although the machine was based heavily on the existing Game Boy tech (it was even backwards compatible with existing black and white software), it essentially spelt the end for the original 'breeze block' version of the machine. As the Color variant gained popularity, over 50 million of its monochrome siblings were relegated to the back of drawers and cupboards the world over.

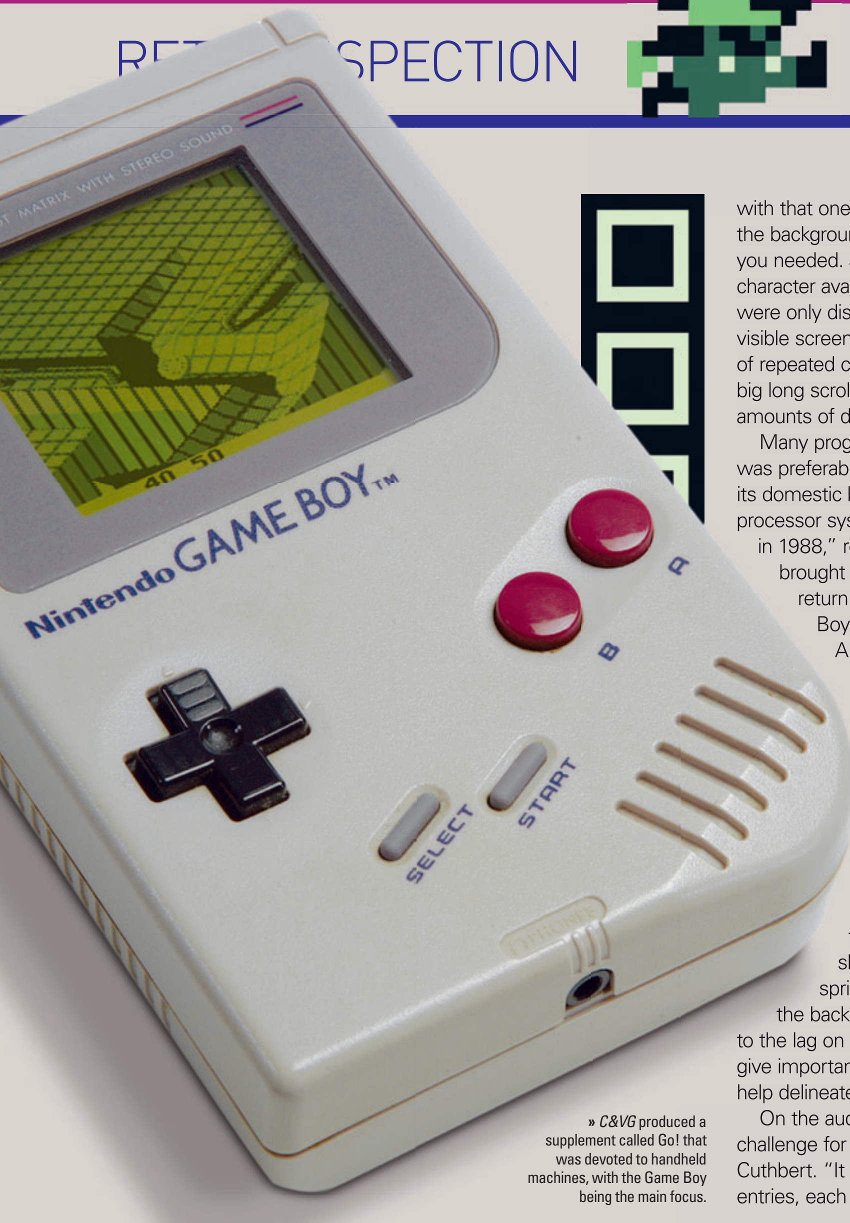
Given the massive popularity of the Game Boy, finding programmers with experience of creating software for the machine is like shooting ducks in a barrel. "I first encountered the Game Boy the first day I started working at Rare back in mid 1989, and it hadn't even been released then, so it was definitely a surprise," recalls Sutherland. "Although the original looks a bit bulky nowadays, back then it seemed impressively compact."

However, in those early days, coding for the Game Boy wasn't exactly a walk in the park. "Part of the challenge in developing for Game Boy was that there was limited documentation; it was usually some very basic hardware information that was translated from the Japanese," continues Sutherland. Thankfully the CPU that powered the portable was at least known to programmers. "At the Game Boy's heart was a castrated Z80 – a CPU I was very familiar with from the Spectrum and Amstrad CPC," explains Jon Ritman, the legendary coder behind *Head Over Heels* and the superlative *Monster Max* on the Game Boy. "They had taken out a few useful features such as the 16-bit instructions and they had also removed most of the registers. The memory was paged in and out to give you access to a lot of memory – far more than a Spectrum could address – but the paging could be hard to manage. However, it was great that it had far more memory than I was used to."

Explaining the inner workings of any games machine in lay terms is tricky, but Rare's Machacek is happy to run through the basics. "It boasted very simple screen architecture with a single character mapped screen that you could scroll," he says. "A small bank of characters for background, a similar size bank for sprites and a third similar size bank shared between background and sprites. We were always fighting







» *C&VG* produced a supplement called Go! that was devoted to handheld machines, with the Game Boy being the main focus.

with that one because it was a juggling act between optimising the background enough to free up space to include the sprites you needed. Just to get this juggling in perspective, if each unique character available in both of those banks for the backgrounds were only displayed once on screen, you'd only fill a quarter of the visible screen space. Just like the NES, you really had to use a lot of repeated characters to fill the background. If you were doing a big long scrolling level with lots of unique scenery then massive amounts of downloading to the banks had to take place."

Many programmers found that working on the Game Boy was preferable to coding for other popular platforms, including its domestic brother, the NES. "I learned to program on a 6502 processor system, rapidly switching to Z80 ones before joining Rare in 1988," remembers Machacek. "Working initially on the NES brought me back to 6502, but the Game Boy allowed me to return to Z80 which I preferred. In some ways the Game Boy seemed a step up from other systems I had used; the Amstrad CPC 464 had no sprites and the ZX Spectrum – which I love to bits – had attribute problems. Aside from the lack of colour, it was a very similar format to the NES that we were already working with." In fact, the machine's four-shade greyscale screen was seen as a bonus by some programmers. "I had been making games for the Spectrum that were using the screen as just two colours, so monochrome didn't phase me at all," comments Ritman. "Four shades was heaven for me – it was two more than I had been using on the Spectrum!" Over time various tricks were developed in order to work around the shortcomings of the display. "We were very clear that sprites needed to stand out clearly from backgrounds, and the backgrounds would blur a bit when you scrolled quickly due to the lag on the display," says Machacek. "Efforts were made to give important sprites, like the player character, strong outlines to help delineate them from the rest, though."

On the audio side of things the Game Boy offered an additional challenge for coders. "The sound chip was interesting," comments Cuthbert. "It had a 'user wave table' of something daft like 20 entries, each of which was 4-bit, so if you could refresh it quick enough it could play sampled sounds, albeit very low-res samples. It also had a more regular FM-style chip and a noise generator." Getting the

INSTANT EXPERT

The Game Boy isn't actually the first machine to use interchangeable game cartridges – Milton Bradley's Microvision, released a decade before in 1979, has that honour

The Game Boy version of *Tetris* has shifted an astonishing 33 million units worldwide – although this includes all copies bundled with the machine itself

The link cable allows simultaneous multiplayer gaming, but it had other uses – for example, *Pokémon* used the cable to exchange data between game packs

Over 450 million Game Boy games have been sold during its lifespan

Although the Game Boy has a reputation of being a system aimed at younger gamers, Nintendo's early strategy was to target older users, and the first adverts reflected this stance

Nintendo developed an accessory called the 'Work Boy' which featured a mini keyboard and a cartridge that held programs such as a calendar, measurement conversion tool and a phone book. It was never released

The four AA batteries required by the Game Boy provide roughly 35 hours of play time

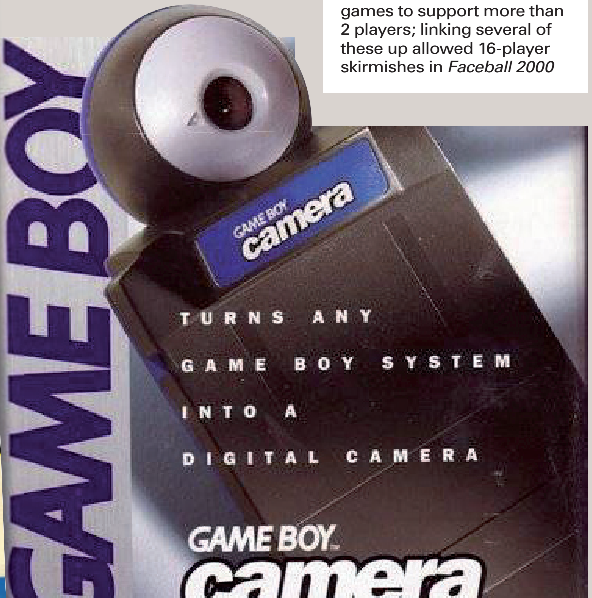
One of the most creative peripherals released for the system was the Game Boy Camera, which allowed users to take 128x112 pixel black and white shots, and then print them out using the Game Boy Printer

Famous Game Boy owners include Robin Williams, Vanilla Ice, Will Smith, Bruce Willis and, er, Danny Baker

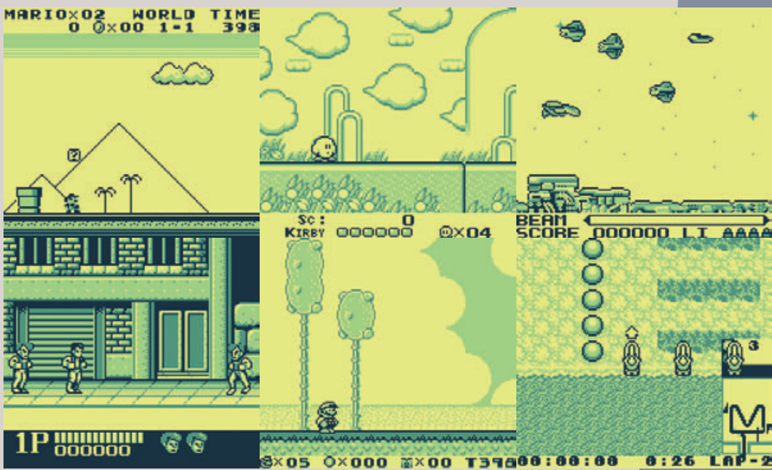
A 4-player adapter was also released which allowed games to support more than 2 players; linking several of these up allowed 16-player skirmishes in *Faceball 2000*







» The camera add-on enabled you to take grainy monochrome pictures.



» **[Game Boy]** The sheer range of games, including great third-party support, gave the Game Boy the edge over rivals.







» The Game Boy's ad campaign pushed all the right buttons…



» With this add-on you could print out images from the Camera and certain games.

most out of this humble setup was no easy task. "The engineers at Rare dabbled with the basic sound effects that our own wave-based audio system could supply," recalls Machacek. "Most of the engineers at Rare didn't understand it that well, I think Mark Betteridge was the only one of us that really knew how to get the sound he wanted. Later on we did incorporate some sound sampling into some titles and were able to play back low quality sampled audio for specific purposes."

When coding for the Game Boy, many developers found that its similarity with the NES was immensely beneficial. "It was obviously a little less powerful, but many tricks we used on the NES translated well," recalls Machacek. "Having pseudo scrolling screens by using a repeating character pattern in places and downloading a repeating 'texture' to them that appeared to scroll was often seen. We always crammed in lots of carefully timed parallax scrolling effects as well. Access to the video RAM was limited, and the space for characters and sprites was small, so you constantly had to download artwork to the video RAM but could only do a little bit per frame. Trying to super-optimise your download code so that it wasted no time and shifted as much data as possible really paid off. I think, between judicious use of H-Blank as well as V-Blank downloading I managed to shift about 24 characters per frame, which allowed us to do the sort of animations that appeared in *Donkey Kong Land* in 1995." Based on the groundbreaking CGI-rendered SNES hit *Donkey Kong Country,* this highly enjoyable platformer is arguably the title that pushed the original Game Boy to its absolute limits, and Machacek is proud of what he achieved. "I deliberately sat down and spent three weeks doing nothing but engine work to get it to a point that it could handle anything we threw at it," he remembers. "At that time many games were downloading about six to eight characters a frame to the video bank and *Donkey Kong Land* needed much more than that with all of the rendered artwork it had to drive. I do know that my lead artist got fed up of waiting for me to finish this work! It was techy stuff that was invisible to him, and you have to understand that three weeks to write an engine seemed like an age when we had put out the Game Boy version of *WWF Superstars* in three months flat – including testing – a couple of years earlier. But the *Donkey Kong Land* engine was able to shift 24 characters a frame by the end, and suddenly we were able to drive a lot of rendered artwork. I don't think anyone complained after that, especially when it sold 4 million units!"

"That perfect marriage of Tetris and the Game Boy found a new audience"

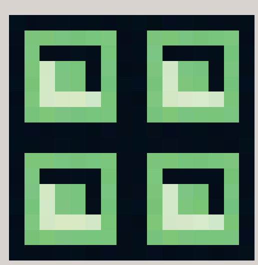
PAUL MACHACEK, PROGRAM MANAGER, RARE DESIGN



Having played an integral part in the success of this near-legendary console by coding some of its most memorable titles, it seems almost churlish to ask them what made the Game Boy so popular, but we'll do it anyway. "In the 1980s there were plenty of dedicated handheld, battery-powered gaming machines," says Machacek. "You'd buy a *Space Invaders* handheld, or a *Pac-Man* one, or whatever. Here we had a single device that you could buy lots of games for and carry them all around simply. It was far superior to those other machines in every way and even came with multiplayer capability if you had a cable. Traditional gamers were now on the move. But at the same time, that perfect marriage of *Tetris* and the Game Boy found a new audience that weren't necessarily into games, and didn't even realise probably that you could buy more games, but simply bought the 'toy that plays that funny little blocks game' that their friends had. Unlike home computers and consoles, the Game Boy could be taken to school or offices; combined with the low price, this was enough for non-gamers to get sucked in too." The legacy of the Game Boy is considerable and some insist that Yokoi's design ideals continue to influence Nintendo's thinking even today. "Arguably Yokoi's philosophy has continued with the Wii," states Sutherland. "The lower spec and price point meant it has a larger initial potential audience, although remember the games are always what actually drive the sales – that's why people buy it, not because of the hardware. *Tetris* was to Game Boy what *Wii Sports* is to Wii."



» "There's nowhere you can't play it" – this print advert once again confirmed that the Game Boy was targeting 'cool' gamers rather than kiddies.

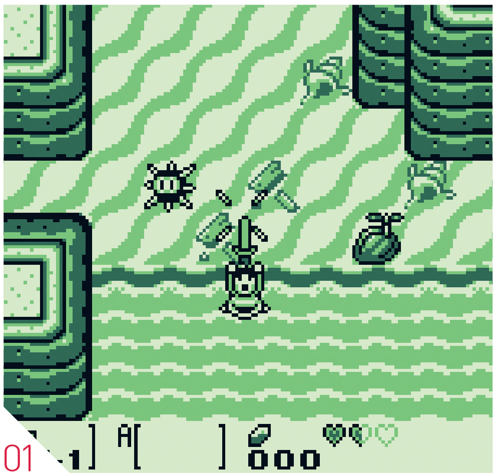




GAME BOY

PERFECT TEN GAMES

There's a worrying number of licensed platformers on Nintendo's handheld, but also a lot of genuine gems. If you're thinking of buying a machine or adding to an existing collection, make sure you at least own the following



01

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: LINK'S AWAKENING

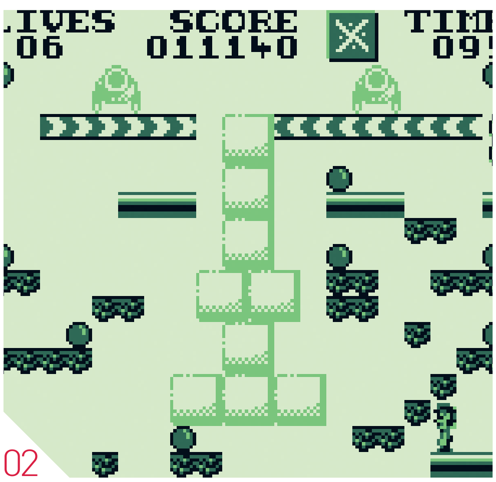
» **RELEASED:** 1993
» **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
» **CREATED BY:** NINTENDO
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** F-ZERO

01 **Although it features** an ending that's the Linkian equivalent of finding Bobby Ewing in the shower, this charming adventure remains one of the Game Boy's best titles. Set on the island of Koholint, *Link's Awakening* has the intrepid adventurer trying to awaken the mystical Wind Fish. His trials take him through some fantastically designed dungeons, see him battling some impressive bosses and generally meandering around a beautifully detailed world. The lack of certain *Zelda* elements – it's not set in Hyrule and Ganon is nowhere to be seen – may upset some, but you'll be doing yourself a grave disservice if you turn your nose up at Link's first portable adventure. A true classic.

BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT GAME BOY ADVENTURE

» **RELEASED:** 1991
» **PUBLISHER:** LJN
» **CREATED BY:** BEAM SOFTWARE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** TRANSFORMERS: ARMADA

02 **Licensed platformers are** often nothing more than a cheap cash-in at the expense of whichever movie they're based upon. Nobody passed this information on to Beam Software though, for which we're eternally grateful. Playing like a Nineties update of *Chuckie Egg*, *BATEGBA* is quite frankly fantastic fun and should be sought out by anyone with a love of platformers. Yes it looks incredibly basic, but the cunning level design, incredibly tight controls and overall slickness more than make up for its graphical shortcomings. Perfect proof that you don't have to be Nintendo or rely on well-known videogame stars in order to make a genuinely excellent (sorry) portable platformer.



02

R-TYPE

» **RELEASED:** 1991
» **PUBLISHER:** IREM
» **CREATED BY:** BITS STUDIOS
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** LAST ACTION HERO

03 **Although superseded** by the incredibly polished *R-Type DX*, this remains the best blaster on the Game Boy. An astonishingly polished port, *R-Type* looks and sounds amazing due to its accurately drawn sprites – right down to a near perfect miniaturised version of Dobkeratops – and impressively authentic music, and plays like a proverbial dream. Yes it's just as annoyingly tough as its arcade parent, but the stunning level design, exceptionally constructed bosses and addictive gameplay will keep bringing you back for more. It's one of the best arcade ports the Game Boy ever had and is a must for shoot-'em-up fans everywhere.

SUPER MARIO LAND

» **RELEASED:** 1989
» **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
» **CREATED BY:** NINTENDO
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** DONKEY KONG

04 **Its successors certainly** boasted far more spit and polish, but in terms of fantastic gameplay hardly anything else on the Game Boy comes close to Mario's first handheld outing. Bowser has been replaced by the sinister-sounding Tatanga while Luigi and Princess Peach are nowhere to be seen, but don't let that put you off as *Super Mario Land* is as good as anything that appeared on Nintendo's home systems thanks to its cleverly designed levels, perfect controls and polished gameplay. Mario even finds time to jump into a sub and plane for some fun shmup action. A superb platformer that sold 18 million copies.

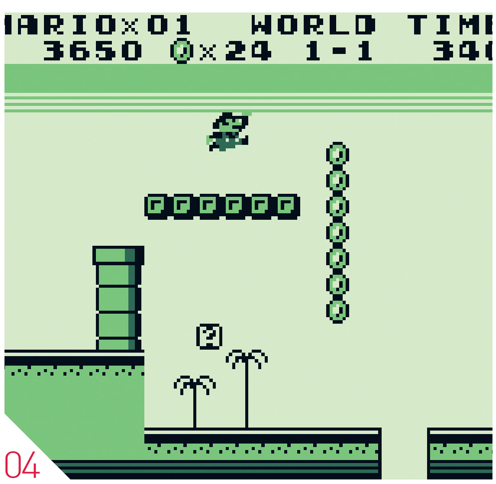
POKÉMON RED/BLUE

» **RELEASED:** 1996
» **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
» **CREATED BY:** GAME FREAK
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** MARIO & WARIO

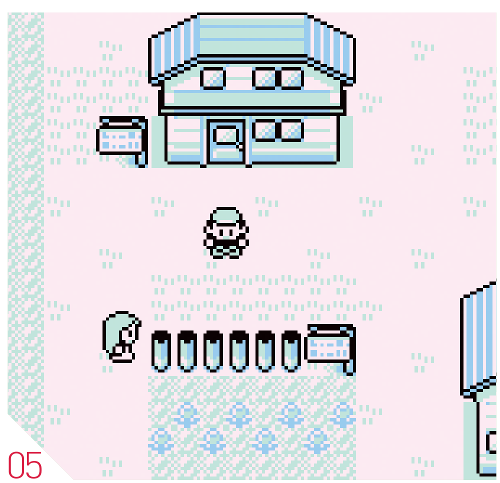
05 **By the time** UK gamers were able to sample the delights of Game Freak's ridiculously absorbing RPG, both *Pokémon Red* and *Blue* had already been available in Japan for three years! The lengthy wait was well worth it, however, and while the series has since gone on to become a global merchandising phenomenon, it's important to remember that Game Freak's first two games were as captivating as they were original. Full of charm and recapturing the trading card craze that used to sweep schools, it took a serious amount of patience and strategy (not to mention a few friends) in order to capture all 151 of Game Freak's cute critters.



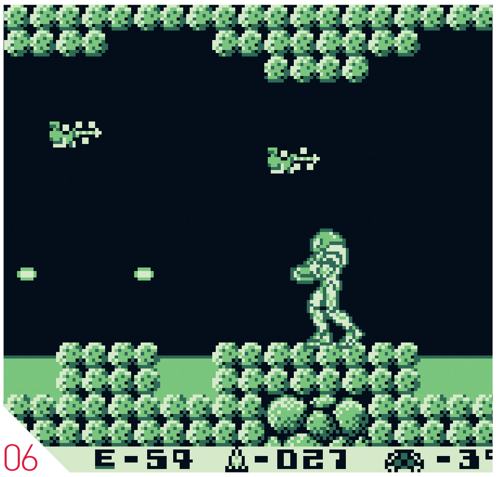
03

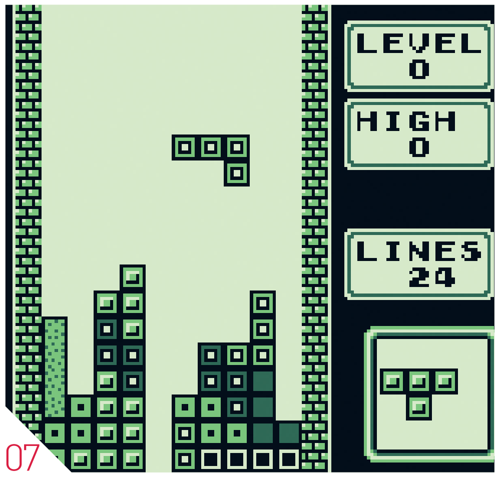


04

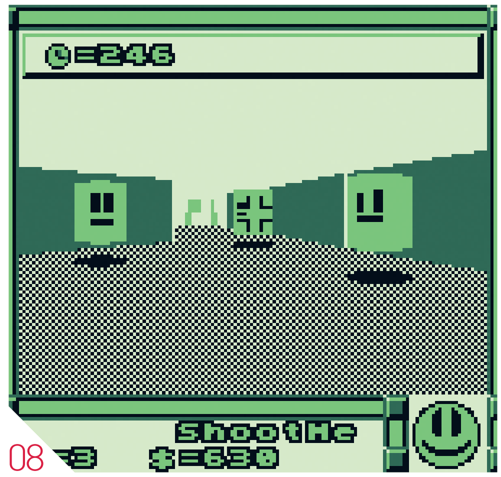


05


06



07


08

METROID II: THE RETURN OF SAMUS

- » **RELEASED:** 1992
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **CREATED BY:** INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ADVANCE WARS

06 **Samus's second outing** is generally considered to be one of her worst, but we'd have to disagree. Sure the graphics take a hit on the Game Boy's tiny screen, and the environments are bland as hell, but it's the gameplay that matters and *The Return Of Samus* delivers in spades. Huge and sprawling, it rewards exploration and expands on the gameplay that made the original *Metroid* so enjoyable. Add in some impressive boss fights and a more refined Samus who's far easier to control than her NES counterpart and the result is a wonderful adventure that just keeps on giving.

TETRIS

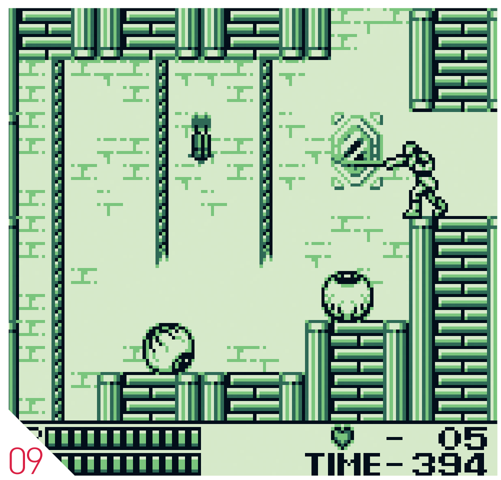
- » **RELEASED:** 1989
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **CREATED BY:** BULLETPROOF SOFTWARE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** YOSHI'S COOKIE

07 **With Nintendo now** being hailed as the saviours of gaming due to the Wii and DS ensnaring brand new gamers, it's easy to forget that it managed to do exactly the same thing with the Game Boy and *Tetris*. Everyone from your best mate to your granny was playing Alexei Pajitnov's classic puzzler back in 1989, no doubt helped by the fact that it was bundled with the Game Boy. Worryingly addictive and sporting that 'one more go' factor, it was a true killer app for the machine and proved that you didn't need flashy graphics or even colour to captivate the masses. Just a damned good game.

FACEBALL 2000

- » **RELEASED:** 1991
- » **PUBLISHER:** BULLETPROOF SOFTWARE
- » **CREATED BY:** XANTH SOFTWARE F/X
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** GATO

08 **What do you** get when you cross forum emoticons with *Doom*? This gem of a first-person shooter still looks astonishing on the Game Boy's tiny screen, despite its slow pace. A port of the Atari ST's *Midi Maze*, *Faceball 2000* can support death matches for up to 16 players. The solo mode is effectively a take on *3D Monster Maze* where you have to guide your HAPPYFACE (Holographically Assisted Physical Pattern Yielded For Active Computerised Embarkation) through 70 increasingly complex mazes, but it's the multiplayer where *Faceball 2000* truly shines. Of course finding 15 other players may be a little tricky now…


09

CASTLEVANIA II: BELMONT'S REVENGE

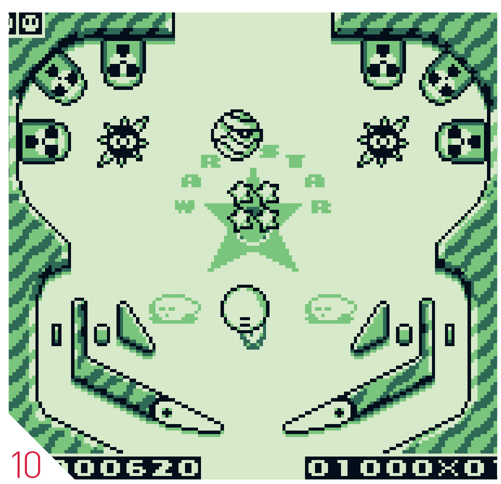
- » **RELEASED:** 1991
- » **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- » **CREATED BY:** KONAMI
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** MYSTICAL NINJA

09 **If the only** Game Boy *Castlevania* you've ever played is the godawful original, then don't be put off by this sequel. Realising what a hash it had made with the series' first portable debut, Konami went back to the drawing board, meaning that *Belmont's Revenge* is not only worthy of the franchise but easily one of the best examples of the genre to be found on the Game Boy. Although there are only four levels, they're extremely large in size, brilliantly designed and feature a range of familiar enemies and bosses. Audio is also impressive, easily matching the excellent tunes that appeared in the NES games. In short, an essential addition to your Game Boy library.

KIRBY'S PINBALL LAND

- » **RELEASED:** 1993
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **CREATED BY:** HAL LABORATORY
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ADVENTURES OF LOLO

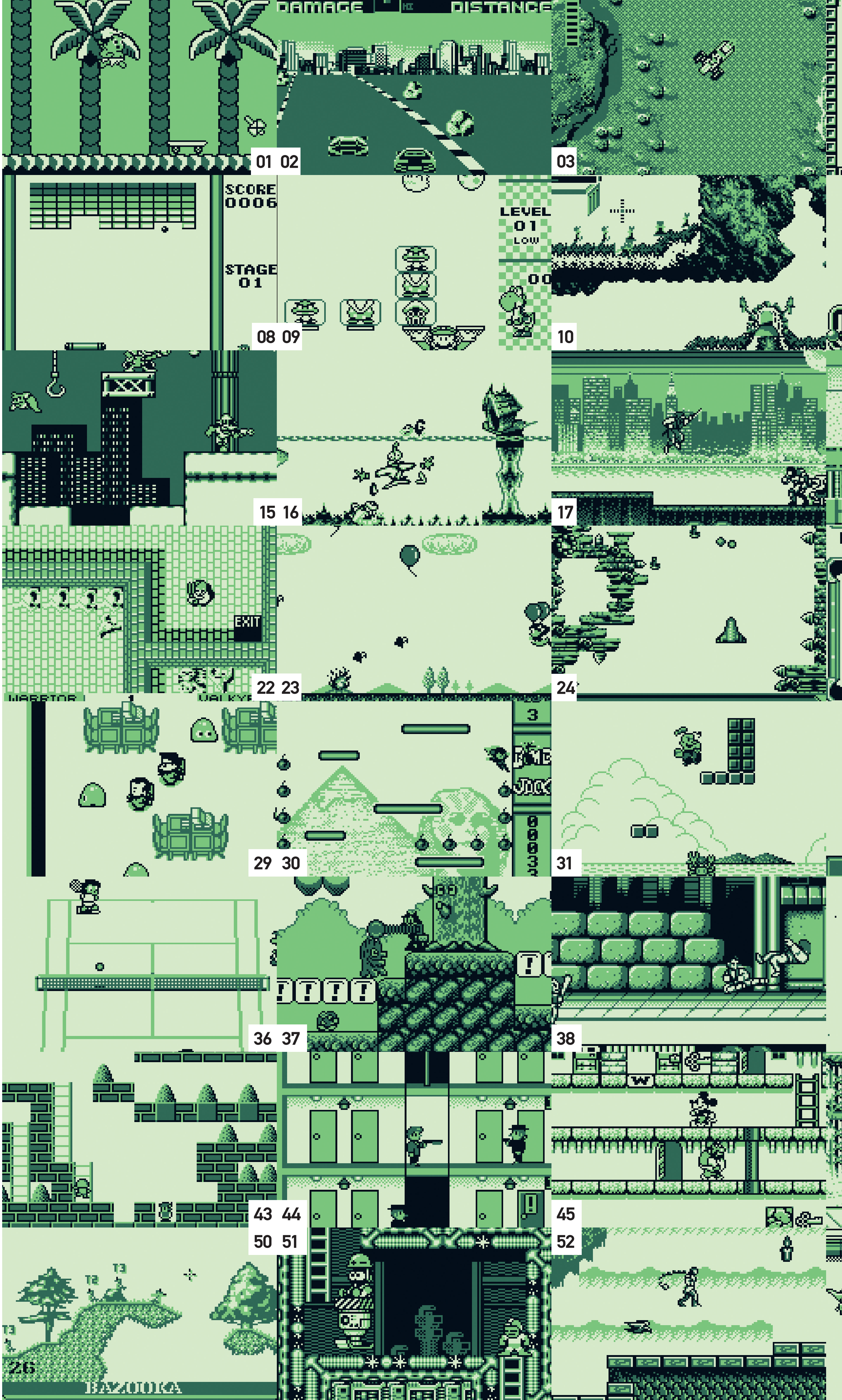
10 **We came oh** so close to nominating the excellent *Revenge Of The Gator* here – also by HAL Laboratory – but *Kirby* is just the better pinball game. Featuring superior physics, a total of three different tables to battle on – each with its own mini-game – and some extremely lush looking visuals, *Kirby's Pinball Land* is a great little title that will bring out the score-attack fiend in everyone. The lack of a multiplayer mode is a little annoying, but this has been put together with so much care and attention that it's impossible not to love. Worryingly addictive and likely to give you extremely sore thumbs, it's another essential game that your Game Boy shouldn't be without.


10

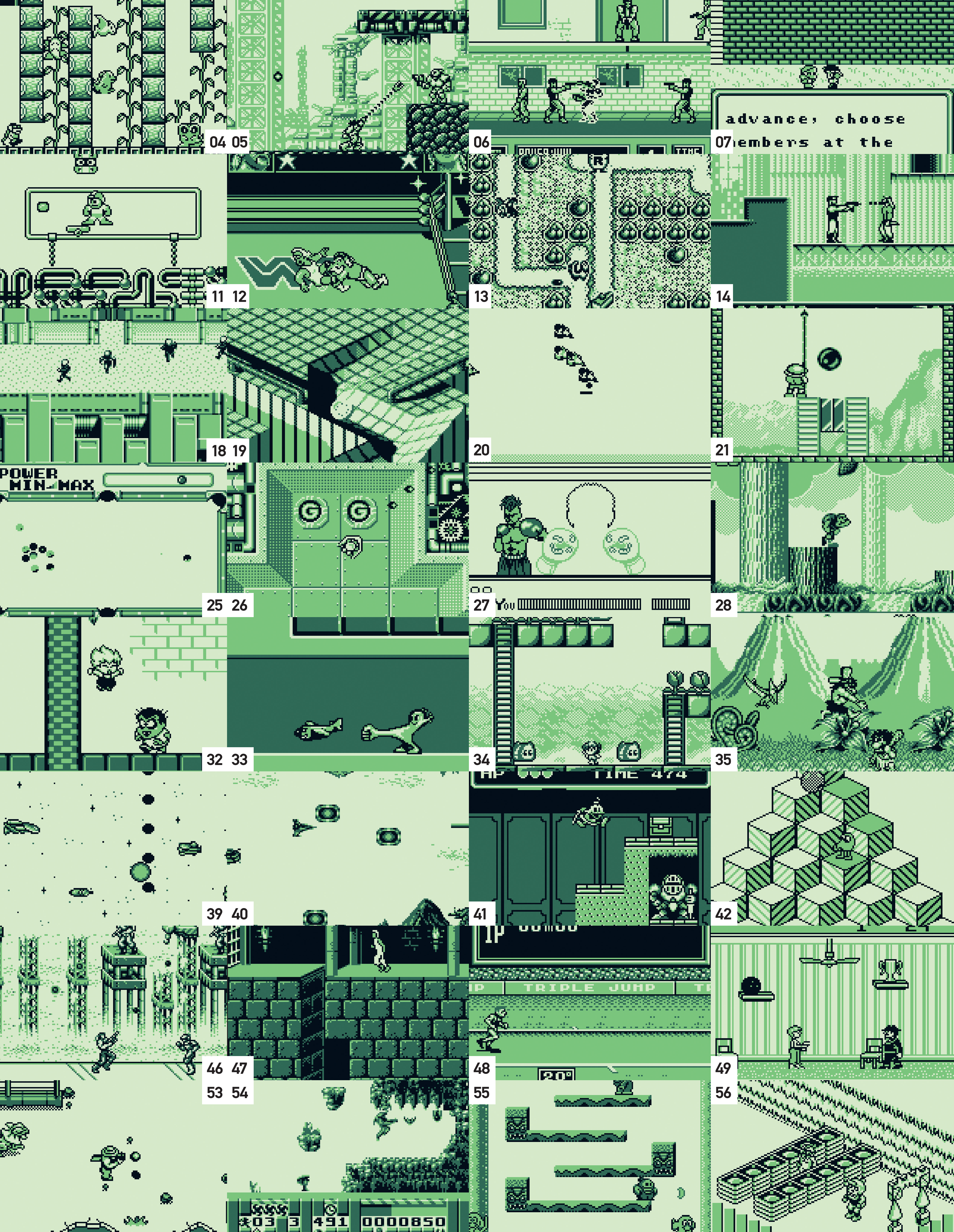


GAME BOY
and the rest...

Look amongst all the licensed tat that was available on Nintendo's handheld and you'll find some truly cracking games. Don't believe us? Then just take a look at this little lot



01 ADVENTURE ISLAND
02 CHASE H.Q.
03 STAR WARS
04 GODZILLA
05 BIONIC COMMANDO
06 ROBOCOP
07 FINAL FANTASY LEGEND
08 ALLEYWAY
09 YOSHI
10 LEMMINGS
11 MEGA MAN II
12 WWF SUPERSTARS
13 MR DO!
14 NAVY SEALS
15 DARKWING DUCK
16 EARTHWORM JIM
17 SHADOW WARRIORS
18 ALIEN 3
19 MARBLE MADNESS
20 SUPER KICK OFF
21 PANG
22 GAUNTLET II
23 BALLOON KID
24 XENON 2: MEGABLAST
25 SIDE POCKET
26 OUT OF GAS
27 BOXING
28 SUPER HUNCHBACK
29 GHOST BUSTERS II
30 BOMB JACK
31 POPEYE 2
32 KID DRACULA
33 JELLY BOY
34 ROD-LAND
35 JOE & MAC
36 TENNIS
37 FELIX THE CAT
38 DOUBLE DRAGON
39 R-TYPE II
40 NEMESIS
41 DUCK TALES
42 QBERT II
43 HYPER LODE RUNNER
44 ELEVATOR ACTION
45 MICKEY MOUSE
46 CONTRA
47 PRINCE OF PERSIA
48 TRACK & FIELD
49 HOME ALONE
50 WORMS
51 MEGA MAN III
52 THE CASTLEVANIA ADVENTURE
53 JURASSIC PARK
54 TURRICAN
55 SNOW BROS JR
56 MONSTER MAX



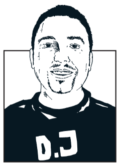
04 05
06
advance, choose
members at the
07
11 12
13
14
18 19
20
21
POWER
MIN MAX
25 26
27
You
28
32 33
34
35
TIME 474
39 40
41
42
TRIPLE JUMP
46 47
48
49
53 54
55
56
03 3 491 0000850

STRIDER II

THE HORROR, THE HORROR



- » **PUBLISHER:** US GOLD
- » **RELEASED:** 1990
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MEGA DRIVE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** DON'T. JUST DON'T



HISTORY

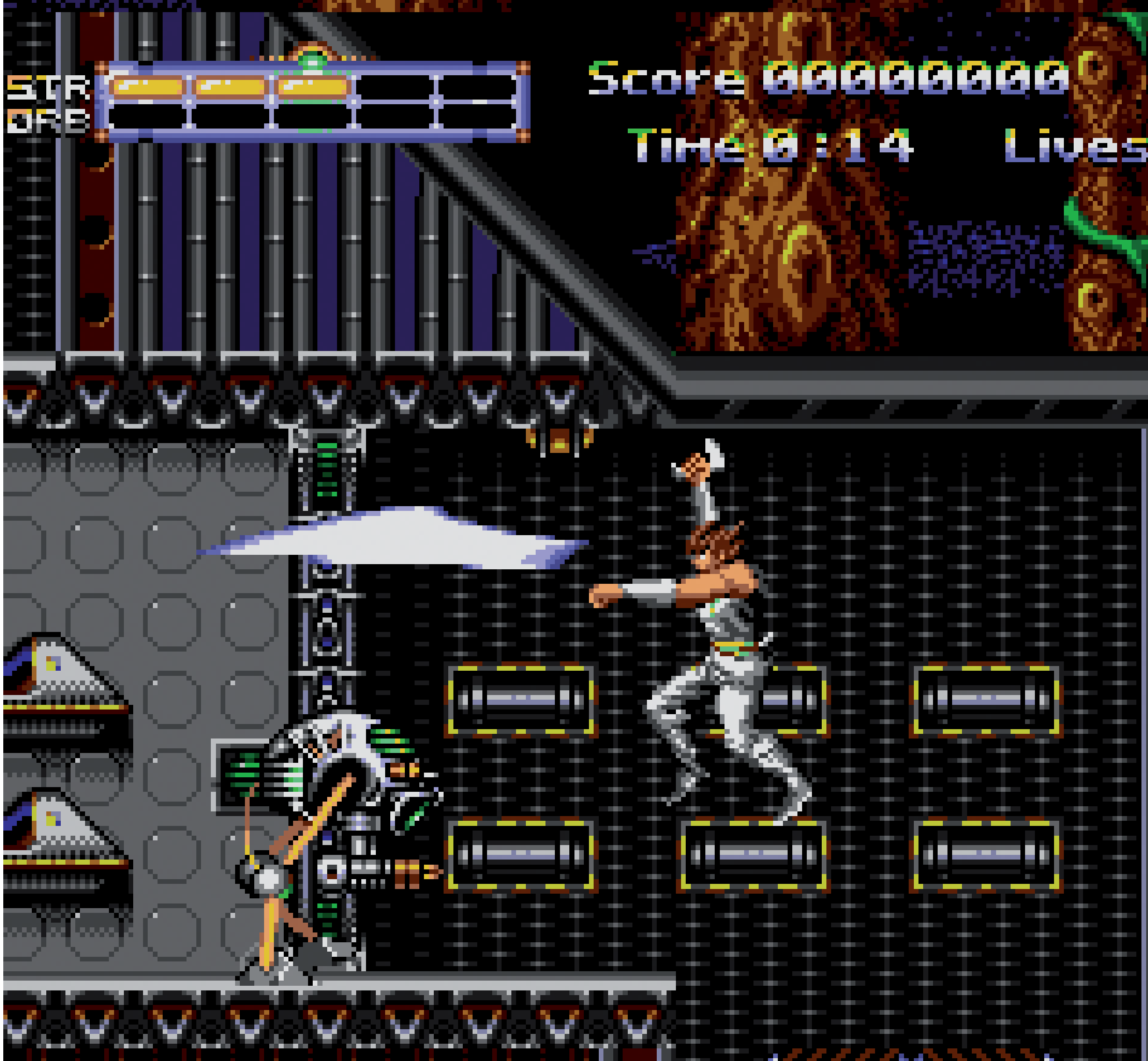
Oh Capcom, how could you? Once upon a time when *Strider* was a massive success in both the arcades and on Sega's Mega Drive, Capcom allowed US Gold to create a new game based on its precious (to me at least) licence.

Buoyed by the success of the home conversions – which were okay, but not amazing if truth be told – US Gold commissioned Tiertex to work on a sequel to the game it had converted in 1989. The end result is one of the worst videogame sequels of all time: a title so bad that even a *Strider* fanatic like myself couldn't bring myself to love it, let alone pay for it. A title so bad that Capcom made a sequel a decade later, named *Strider 2*, no doubt in an attempt to sever any ties with Tiertex's abominable 1990 effort.

Indeed, everything about *Strider II*, or *Strider Returns* or whatever the hell you want to call it, is wrong. The main character Strider Hinjo – I'm assuming he's a new character, either that or Tiertex simply got Hiryu's name wrong in the instruction manual – lacks the grace of his elder counterpart, while the levels he has to negotiate are amazingly bland and lack the visual impact of the arcade original. Design is also woeful, with enemies and bosses showing an equal lack of care and attention and missing the grace and beauty of their arcade counterparts; it's almost as if Tiertex simply churned out any old rubbish because its original effort had been so well received…

The sequel was universally derided by virtually every reviewer that played it. I can only assume that Capcom's decision to allow Tiertex to make a brand new game was because it had been genuinely impressed with the developer's previous effort, or because there was a large bag of money involved. After recently playing both the Master System and Mega Drive versions again through a stream of bitter tears, I can only assume that it was due to the latter reason.






STR
ORB
Score 00000000
Time 0:49
Lives 3


STR
ORB
Score 00000000
Time 2:52
Lives 3

THE MAKING OF...

NIGHT TRAP

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA/DIGITAL PICTURES
- » **DEVELOPER:** DIGITAL PICTURES/ AXLON/HASBRO
- » **RELEASED:** 1992 (MEGA-CD)
- » **PLATFORM:** MEGA-CD, 3DO, SEGA 32X CD, PC CD-ROM, HASBRO NEMO (UNRELEASED)
- » **GENRE:** INTERACTIVE MOVIE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10+



Grainy video, bad acting, scantily clad females and blood-sucking assailants (not to mention the involvement of Atari founder Nolan Bushnell); let's face it, Night Trap has it all. **DAMIEN MCFERRAN** speaks to the man behind the video nasty that had everyone's chins wagging in the early Nineties - including those of the US senate

Ever since its inception the videogame industry and controversy have gone hand in hand. *Custer's Revenge, Death Race, Grand Theft Auto, Sam Fox's Strip Poker*… these titles and many more like them have secured their position in the history books by stirring up trouble, but few games have instigated the kind of furore that results in the industry-wide adoption of a ratings classification system. When it comes to notorious videogames, *Night Trap* is in a league of its own – the real irony being that its iniquitous status as highly subversive 'video nasty' is almost entirely undeserved.

Creator Rob Fulop is a man whose name might be familiar to Atari addicts – he's the person responsible for programming many excellent domestic conversions of the company's most successful coin-op hits. "My first commercial release was *Night Driver*, followed by a version of *Space Invaders* for the Atari 400/800 Personal Computer," he recalls. Annoyed by Atari's refusal to credit its game designers, Fulop helped establish publisher Imagic. *Demon Attack* and *Cosmic Ark* soon followed, both released on his former employer's 2600 hardware and both shifting an impressive volume of units at retail. Imagic was eventually sunk by the videogame crash of the Eighties and Fulop joined Atari founder Nolan Bushnell's new company Axlon. The firm was working on an innovative entertainment system codenamed 'Project NEMO' (which apparently stood for 'Never Ever Mention Outside') that used VHS technology to create movie-like experiences far more visually arresting than anything available at the time. "The NEMO system allowed multiple tracks of video to run simultaneously from a consumer tape deck," explains Fulop. "Still frames of the video were interleaved together, sort of like shuffled playing cards, and the hardware would freeze selected frames for a few milliseconds until the next frame of that track came off the tape."

A prototype game called *Scene Of The Crime* was produced in order to demonstrate what this potentially groundbreaking system was capable of; this short demo would essentially serve as the blueprint for *Night Trap*. "The main difference was that *Scene Of The Crime* was a five-minute demo, whereas *Night Trap* was a full game," comments Fulop. "Also, there were no 'traps' in *Scene Of The Crime*. Instead, players merely followed suspicious characters around a house trying to find who stole the money." As an exhibition of what NEMO could do, *Scene Of The Crime* clearly worked: it was shown to executives at toy giant Hasbro in 1986 and convinced the company to pick up the system for retail.

Night Trap's production schedule was part movie shoot, part videogame programming. "It was shot in 16 days in 1987 and took another few months to edit into the separate tracks," recalls Fulop. "The software was developed concurrently. I think, all told, the game took about six months to get working." Because Fulop and his team were working with pioneering technology, they soon discovered that old-fashioned development methods didn't always work. "With a traditional game, the author can diddle to their heart's content with all the on-screen elements, often right up until the game is completed," he says. "This process is referred to as 'tweaking' and is what makes a good game work so well. With a 'moviegame' like *Night Trap*, the author has practically no 'tweaking' ability as all the assets they have to work with are handed over as a video stream; there is no way to go back and insert a new scene or change the timing of when an actor comes into view. The game must be designed as a script and the first time the game is played is much later; at that point it's too late to make significant changes."

Indeed, one of the key differences that separates *Night Trap* from games



» [32X] Scantily clad girls, poor acting, and a nonsensical plot. Why wouldn't you want to play *Night Trap*?



» To promote the PC version, this deliberately controversial advert appeared in magazines. Ironically, it was gorier than the game itself.

> **"IT WAS SHOT IN 16 DAYS IN 1987 AND TOOK ANOTHER FEW MONTHS TO EDIT"**



» [Mega-CD] Some of the acting on display in this game is truly painful to watch, but it all adds to the campy feel that has made *Night Trap* a cult classic.



» [3DO] If you needed proof that this is a product of the Eighties, check out those gnarly hairstyles.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

DEMON ATTACK
SYSTEM: ATARI 2600
YEAR: 1982

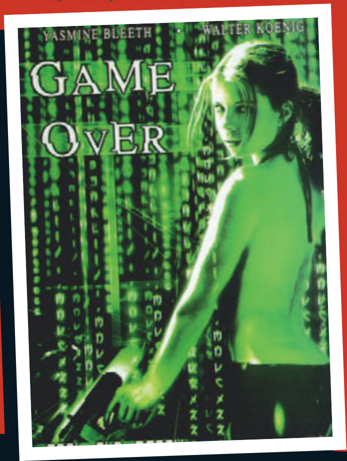
MAX MAGIC
SYSTEM: PHILLIPS CD-I
YEAR: 1996

DOGZ (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: PC
YEAR: 1997



THE MAKING OF… NIGHT TRAP

MAKING MOVIES

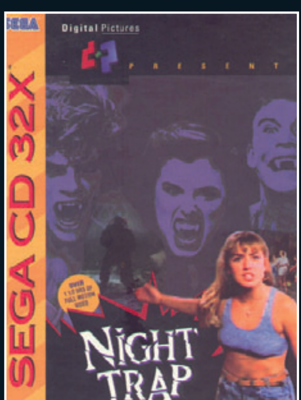


TOM ZITO BUILT his Digital Pictures empire on the success of *Night Trap* and went on to become something of a figurehead for FMV gaming in the early Nineties; notable titles include *Ground Zero Texas*, *Corpse Killer*, *Quarterback Attack* and *Supreme Warrior*. In an ironic twist, footage from several Digital Pictures games was spliced together to create 35 minutes of action for the 2003 straight-to-DVD release *Game Over* (aka *Maximum Surge Movie*), in which the central protagonist must play various videogames in order to save humanity. The asinine plot at least gives some justification for the hilariously unconnected nature of the action but sadly doesn't clarify why the video quality varies from 'passable' to 'barely VHS' standard. To top it all off, former Baywatch beauty Yasmine Bleeth is given top billing despite the fact that she only appears during the segments lifted directly from Digital Pictures' most auspicious FMV 'moviegame', *Maximum Surge* – which never actually saw commercial release.



» [32X] Each room in the house has a trap that you can use to ensnare the evil Augers trying to harm the girls – but you have to be in the right place at the right time to activate them.

> "I thought the whole witch-hunt was ridiculous and without merit"



» Does anyone else feel that the US boxes Sega made were ugly as hell?

of the same era is the fact that it uses real actors instead of sprites as its protagonists. However, for the thespians in question, the groundbreaking nature of the project was largely lost on them. "The actors knew it was an interactive game, but their day-to-day process was identical to making a movie or TV show," recalls Fulop. "They came on set, rehearsed their lines, and performed as directed. There were a few times they needed to work out careful timing of when they entered and left the scene, but such was coordinated by other people on the set."

Understandably, the status of the cast in question wasn't exactly A-list. "Interactive 'moviegames' were populated by performers either on their way 'up' or on their way 'down' the Hollywood ladder; nobody aspired to appear in a 'moviegame!'" chuckles Fulop. Arguably the most famous person to be involved was Dana Plato, notable for her work on the US sitcom *Diff'rent Strokes*, in which she had starred from 1978 until its eventual cancellation in 1986. The termination of the show – coupled with Plato's personal problems with drugs and alcohol – resulted in her career adopting a distinctly downward trajectory. *Night Trap* was just one of the many dubious projects that she become involved with. "Dana was fine to work with at first, very professional. She needed the work," remembers Fulop. "Later she became more problematic; she'd come late and never wanted to rehearse. Her doing this project was obviously a step down from her previous popularity and she didn't make a great deal of effort to hide this fact."

With the footage in the can and the programming complete, *Night Trap* was readied for launch alongside another NEMO 'moviegame' called *Sewer Shark*. However, just before NEMO was about to be officially launched at the start of 1989, the worst happened – Hasbro pulled the plug. The company cited the high cost of the hardware (thought to be in the region of around $300) as the reason for the decision and although *Sewer Shark* and *Night Trap* had eaten through an combined budget of approximately $4.5 million (making them two of the most expensive videogames of the era), it looked as though they would never see the light of day. Fulop walked away disappointed but essentially unfazed by the entire affair. He went on to form PF.Magic (which would later become famous for creating the bestselling *Petz* virtual pet simulation series) and allowed Project NEMO to fade into memory.

However, *Night Trap* refused to pass quietly into obscurity and was given a second lease of life thanks to Tom Zito. "Zito was the General Manager of the Hasbro Interactive unit based in California," explains Fulop. "He was the executive producer of both *Night Trap* and *Sewer Shark* and was my supervisor during production of both titles." When the Hasbro deal turned sour, Zito quickly purchased all the material related to the two abandoned games and founded his own company, called Digital Pictures. Rumour has it that Zito had originally hoped to bring the two games to the Super Nintendo CD-ROM unit that was being developed in conjunction with Sony, but when Nintendo's add-on failed to materialise he decided to sign up with Sega and launch on the company's Mega-CD system instead. *Night Trap* had made the transition from VHS to CD-ROM and was pushed out onto store shelves in 1992 (five years after it was originally created), upon which it instantly became embroiled in one of the most controversial chapters in the history of videogames.

The following year a joint US Senate Judiciary and Government Affairs Committee held a hearing on the sticky subject of videogame violence. Senator Joseph Lieberman attacked *Night Trap* with the same vitriol usually reserved for rapists and murderers, claiming that it promoted a "culture of carnage" and was "a disgusting, offensive game that

» [3DO] *Night Trap* apparently encouraged violence against woman; despite the fact you're actually rescuing them.





» [32x] Games could get surprisingly tense, especially as you watched the Augers go about their business.



» [Mega-CD] Every teenage boy wants to view girls in their nighties.

should not be shown to civilisation." The other title under scrutiny was Midway's gory fighter *Mortal Kombat* – a fact that irks Fulop even to this day. "It was annoying to hear *Night Trap* compared to *Mortal Kombat* – a game featuring one character ripping the heart out of their defeated opponent's chest," admits Fulop. "The most graphic scene in *Night Trap* involved two hooded thugs dragging their victim off camera."

In a move that was especially humiliating for Sega, Nintendo's chairman Howard Lincoln was asked to give his opinion on the uproar. "Lincoln testified in front of the Senate, stating *Night Trap* would never appear on a Nintendo system because it did not pass their guidelines," Fulop explains. "He was referring obviously to the technical guidelines – the game would not run on the Nintendo system due to lack of CD-ROM – but he made it sound as if the game was unworthy of Nintendo's moral standards." Nintendo's sanctimonious stance was a deliberate move to distance itself from the scandal and make its bitter rival Sega look bad, but this self-righteousness didn't last

» Rob Fulop today



long. "Nintendo's subsequent licensing of *Mortal Kombat* on the SNES was a complete hypocrisy," Fulop exclaims.

This hullabaloo ensured that *Night Trap* became infamous for its supposedly objectionable content and its creator is still clearly stinging from the assault even today. "I thought the whole witch-hunt was ridiculous and totally without merit," Fulop recalls. "I was very embarrassed that something I had made was being torn apart like that. Many people were getting the complete wrong idea about the game." Indeed, Lieberman's assertion that *Night Trap* somehow encouraged violence against women was laughably ill-informed – as anyone who has played the game will know, the aim is to save the female characters, rather than delight in their demise. It speaks volumes that Lieberman himself has since admitted that he never actually played the game. "There is no easier target than pop culture for a politician who wants to be seen as looking out for the common good," says Fulop with a wry smile. However, the veteran developer admits that one good thing did come out of all the fuss. "The controversy around *Night Trap* led directly to the establishment of a rating system for games," he states. "I think it made sense. Violent or potentially disturbing games should be labelled as such, because a lot of grandparents buy these games for their grandkids, and don't really have a clue as to what they are buying." The Entertainment Software Ratings Board (or 'ESRB') was founded in 1994 and is still running today.

Having been instrumental in developing the concept of 'FMV gaming' (or 'moviegaming' as Fulop likes to call it), does he feel that the negative critical reaction to *Night Trap* – and FMV games in general – was warranted? "Comparing *Night Trap* to a traditional videogame is like comparing *American Idol* to *Star Wars*," he says. "They are two totally different experiences offered on different platforms to different audiences. Nobody intended *Night Trap* to hold up to a traditional game. The intent of the 'moviegame' genre was to go after the 95 per cent of the people in the world who don't play traditional videogames. So throwing rocks at such a thing and claiming that the gameplay doesn't hold up compared to *Doom* is silly. That said, we hardly created a breakthrough form of interactive entertainment. We took a shot, it didn't go very far, end of story. But we never for one second thought we were making something that should be compared to a real videogame. A game reviewer complaining that *Night Trap* isn't a fun enough game is like a film critic complaining that a game show doesn't have enough action scenes."

Time may not have been particularly kind to *Night Trap* and FMV gaming in general, but Fulop is still pleased with what was achieved all those years ago. "I'm most proud that we got it to work at all and that we managed to put out a truly novel game format, something that nobody had ever played before," he beams. Although 'moviegames' have all but been forgotten as 3D graphics technology has advanced and become ever more realistic, Fulop isn't convinced that it's an entirely dead medium yet. "I think interactive movies haven't reached a large enough audience," he comments. "As long as they are designed to appeal primarily to gamers, there is obviously no comparison; the sheer number of times one can interact meaningfully with a 'moviegame' pales to the continuous interaction offered by something like *Grand Theft Auto*. That said, I still maintain that there exists a huge potential market for FMV entertainment that is not so 'gamelike'."



DANA PLATO 1964-1999

Dana Plato is undoubtedly the most famous face in *Night Trap*'s cast of otherwise unknown actors, but she's a lot less well known here in the UK than she is in the US. Her involvement with Fulop's game was something of a low point in her career, but it was by no means her professional nadir. Following several breast augmentations, a spread in Playboy magazine and appearances in soft porn movies, she tragically died in May 1999 from an overdose of prescription medication; the official reason was ruled to be suicide, but many close friends insist it was an accidental death. Despite the problems experienced during the filming of *Night Trap*, Fulop still has a good word to say about the late actress: "Obviously I was very sad to hear about Dana; she had a very fun spirit and had a great sense of humour. She deserved better."



FROM THE ARCHIVES

RETRO GAMER DIGS UP THE FILES OF THE CLASSIC COMPANIES OF OLD

Revolution Software

Revival? Renaissance? As Revolution Software attempts to breathe new life into the point-and-click genre, David Crookes talks to co-founders Charles Cecil and Tony Warriner

No one would have believed that, 13 years after *Broken Sword* strode into the consciousness of point-and-click adventure aficionados everywhere, George Stobbart and Nico Collard would reunite in a remake and give hope that a once-dead genre could be revived. But that is what has happened. In deciding to give its flagship franchise a lick of pixellated paint and re-release *Broken Sword*'s 1996 debut for the Wii and DS, Revolution Software is hoping to explode the myth that gamers don't care about such narrative-heavy, brain-led games.

Yet the landscape is very different now compared to when Revolution first began. In the late Eighties and early Nineties, point-and-click games were not so much commonplace as near-dammit compulsory purchases. Prolific developer Sierra, with its *Police Quest*, *Space Quest* and *King's Quest* series, ruled the roost, both in its chosen genre and as an outright producer of games. And while today Revolution can release *Broken Sword* on platforms bereft of solid competition, back then it was the very fact that Sierra was so strong and dominant that inspired co-founders Charles Cecil, Tony Warriner and Dave Sykes – if only because they didn't actually think too highly of the developer's titles.

"Let's be honest," declares Cecil, his voice initially buoyant but becoming progressively grave. "If *Monkey Island* would have been released at the time we were thinking of producing *Lure Of The Temptress* then we would have been concerned. Maybe our game would never have been started The fact is, we thought we could better anything that was out there at the time."

Cecil loved adventure games. After leaving the respected, independent, fee-paying Bedales School in Hampshire in 1980, he studied mechanical engineering at the University of Manchester where he met fellow student Richard Turner who had set up a publishing company called Artic Computing. He agreed to write some text adventure games for him.

The first was the graphic-less *Inca Curse* in 1981 and it used a simple verb-noun command interface. Pitting gamers within a South American jungle close to an Inca temple, the aim was to explore and find treasure. Cecil followed it up with *Espionage Island* in the same year, with players finding themselves on a mission to discover a secret enemy location.

In 1982, the sci-fi adventure *Ship Of Doom* was released and it showed an early glimpse of Cecil's sense of humour. After typing 'Rape Robot', a message appeared, purportedly from the Mary Whitehouse National Viewers and Listeners Association, calling on computer games to be scooped into the 1984 Video Recordings Act. The games were so successful and won so many fans that Turner asked Cecil to become a director of Artic.

"Richard was a very bright man," says Cecil. "And that's when everything started for me. When I look back, we produced some extraordinary games. One in particular – *1K ZX Chess* [for the ZX81] – was astonishingly innovative. To run in just 1K was a massive feat and I think people have since called it the greatest program ever written. It showed me that anything was possible. And, of course,

INSTANT EXPERT

Charles Cecil was encouraged to write text adventure games by Richard Turner, owner of Artic Computing in 1981. He produced three: *Inca Curse*, *Espionage Island* and *Ship Of Doom*.

After becoming director of Artic, he founded Paragon Programming which made *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom*. It whipped up his appetite for games and he later joined US Gold.

Cecil moved to Activision but was spurred into setting up Revolution following a chat with Mirrorsoft deputy MD Sean Brennan.

Revolution Software was born following a meeting with Tony Warriner, with whom he worked with at Artic, and programmer Dave Sykes.

Revolution's original office was above an arcade in Hull. After signing a lucrative deal with Virgin Interactive, they were able to relocate to York.

Lure Of The Temptress was released in 1992, *Beneath A Steel Sky* two years later and *Broken Sword* debuted in 1996. Revolution had grown to 40 staff and were Europe's finest point-and-click adventure makers.

Spiralling costs of producing adventure games, and the increased risk, meant Revolution outsourced its fourth *Broken Sword* game. It has recently produced Wii and DS versions of the original *Broken Sword*.





from an adventure perspective, the next step was graphics."

Cecil left Artic Computing in 1985 and he established the development company, Paragon Programming. One of the most notable titles to come out of the company was the Spectrum version of *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom* and, like other Paragon games, it was published by Birmingham-based US Gold. Such was Cecil's success at Paragon that US Gold boss Geoff Brown invited him to join the company as Software Development Manager. After working there for 18 months, however, he moved to Activision to manage its European Development Studio but he wanted to set up his own development company. Luckily for him, he had been approached by Sean Brennan, the deputy managing director of Mirrorsoft. Brennan told Cecil the publisher would support him if he started as a developer and it was just the spur he needed.

So Charles had a fresh look at the landscape of point-and-click adventure games. He saw what he perceived to be a raft of games which took themselves too seriously. "There was a King Graham of Daventry, for crying out loud," he says in disbelief at *King's Quest*. "For me Sierra's games were just becoming trite. There was an opening there, I thought, for a studio which could come in and produce lively point-and-click experiences that had humour. The genre was crying out for it." All that he had to do was put a team together and create a Sierra-beating game.

Source Of Inspiration

"When I saw *3D Monster Maze* on the ZX81," says Tony Warriner, co-founder of Revolution Software, his enthusiasm coming to the fore, "well, I couldn't quite believe what I was seeing. I remember being very impressed."

> **"I wrote an Amstrad CPC game called Obsidian… instead of studying at school"** TONY WARRINER

It was 1981 and Warriner was starting to become interested in gaming. From the moment he had learned to program on his first computer, a Camputers Lynx, he wanted to produce his own titles.

And when he looked around at the computers which were starting to appear during that decade – the Spectrum, the Commodore, the Amstrad CPC – he became very excited.

He says: "There seemed to be new innovations and genres being invented all the time. Companies like Ultimate Play the Game were constantly pushing forward with new ideas. Gargoyle Games I particularly remember, too. Then there was the greatest of them all – *Elite*. And those early computers remain close to my heart. In fact I still have my Camputers Lynx somewhere and I bought another from eBay recently, in case the first one breaks."

Although Warriner was still at school, his desire to write his own games was so strong that he wrote his first commercial quality title at precisely the time he should have been revising for his exams. "It was about 1985," he recalls. "I wrote an Amstrad CPC game called *Obsidian*. I did this instead of studying at school. A potentially foolish strategy, but it's actually worked out pretty well."

The game was published by Artic Software and it received amazing reviews. "It was an AA Rave in Amstrad Action magazine, which was quite an honour," he says, proudly. "A French magazine also rated the game higher than another title called *Get Dexter*. Quite how this happened I'm not sure, as *Get Dexter* was leagues ahead of my game. I was actually looking at it recently and, for the time, it was a phenomenal technical achievement."

Warriner followed up *Obsidian* with *Ultima Ratio* in 1987, published by TelecomSoft and ▶

BY THE NUMBERS

- **1** Number of voice actors used for George Stobbart in the *Broken Sword* series
- **2** Number of locations for Revolution – Hull and York
- **2** Number of Revolution games free to download (*BASS, LOTT*)
- **2.5** Version of *Broken Sword* created by fans
- **3** Number of text adventures written by Cecil for Artic
- **3** Number of BAFTA nominations received by *Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon*
- **4** Number of *Broken Sword* games
- **67** Metacritic score for 2001 release *In Cold Blood*
- **68** Age of Mirrorsoft founder Robert Maxwell when he died
- **80** Metacritic score for debut *Broken Sword*
- **10,000** Amount in pounds Charles Cecil borrowed from his mum to set up Revolution
- **1,000,000** Sales of *Broken Sword*



BROKEN SWORD DS AND WII

We chat to Charles Cecil about his latest Broken Sword adventure on the Wii and DS



Retro Gamer: Why did you decide to port *Broken Sword*?

Charles Cecil: Having used the Wii and DS, it became obvious that they would be ideal platforms on which to create a point-and-click adventures and as *Broken Sword* is our most successful game and one that I wanted to revisit, it was felt it would be an ideal opportunity to produce something fresh. *Broken Sword* on the DS and Wii is not a port. There is several hours of fresh gameplay. A port would have been a lazy rehash and we didn't want to do that.

RG: How easy was it convincing Ubisoft that the point-and-click genre is far from dead?

CC: Ubisoft have been brilliant. They immediately understood how point-and-click games could work very well on the Wii and DS, given their unique controls.

RG: What improvements will *The Director's Cut* offer over previous versions?

CC: We've added so much more to *The Director's Cut*. The logic has been re-implemented, the story has been considerably added to, there is a hint system which allows gamers who are stuck to progress, there's a facial expression system which allows players to empathise with the characters, and the graphics are much enhanced. It's an altogether much richer experience.

RG: Can we expect updates of some of your other point-and-click adventures?

CC: It depends on how well *Broken Sword* does but I would love to create further games in the *Broken Sword* series for the Wii and DS and, now that we have got back together with Dave Gibbons, I wouldn't rule out a sequel to *Beneath A Steel Sky*. Several original games are at the storyboard stage, and we have been approached to write a *Broken Sword* movie. So there is a lot going on.

RG: Aside from *Broken Sword*, what point-and-click adventure (from any company) would you like to see make a return.

CC: There have been many great point-and-click adventures and many people love those created by LucasArts.



Death Stalker in 1988, which was released by Codemasters. He worked for Cascade Games for a short while and created *19 Boot Camp* which was published by Activision in 1989. But then he left gaming and went to work for Bytron to produce aeronautical systems. One of the people he worked with was Dave Sykes.

Like Cecil, neither Warriner or Sykes were big fans of the mainstream graphic adventures such as *Space Quest* and *King's Quest*. Although they enjoyed *Leisure Suit Larry*, they felt some of Sierra's games to be childish and clichéd and it was to the games from Level 9 that they looked for inspiration. Warriner in particular loved games such as *Emerald Isle*, *Colossal Cave* and *Worm In Paradise* and he saw they had written a game engine to cope with the new trend of point-and-click games. In 1989, he was about his produce his own.

Cecil picked up the phone and called Warriner, who had impressed him with his work for Artic on *Obsidian*, to discuss setting up a fresh company. Warriner, in turn, recommended Cecil speak to Sykes as well. The trio drove to a deserted corner of North Wales and they began to discuss writing an adventure game. Months later, Cecil persuaded his mother to lend him £10,000 and by March 1990, Warriner and Sykes began to work on what would become *Lure Of The Temptress*. "Tony had a real sense for games and programming," says Cecil. "He was so proficient that he would work in pure hexadecimal code."

> **"I felt we had to create something really different to what was out there"** CHARLES CECIL



Charles Cecil, co-founder of Revolution Software. He had previously programmed classic Spectrum text adventures including *Inca Curse* and *Espionage Island*.

Warriner recalls the first meeting well. "Charles was effectively going to work part-time for Activision and part-time for Revolution and he was crucial. He knew the whole game market pretty well. He had this interest in narrative and he also saw that the Sierra games of the time were doing really well. We took a look at a *Leisure Suit Larry* game and thought we could do something better – both from a design standpoint, as well as coding. It turned out to be far harder than we expected, of course, and the result was the rather quirky *Lure Of The Temptress*."

The Revolution team understood the importance of getting a solid system in place. He wanted a program that would give the gamer flexibility and would allow for greater freedom in the virtual world. And so he commissioned a team to work on what would become the Virtual Theatre engine – a piece of software that would get many people talking.

"I felt we had to create not just a new gaming engine but something really different to what else was out there," explains Charles. "So we spent £20,000 on producing the Virtual Theatre engine which Tony created and it was all about producing a core piece of programming that would allow us to string

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Charles Cecil

Charles is still the managing director of Revolution Software – and now the only full-time member – and his influence continues to be massive in the games industry as a whole. He is on the advisory panel of the Develop Conference. He co-founded Game Republic, an alliance of game developers, of which he is a director. He is a board member of Screen Yorkshire, a regional agency which supports film, television and interactive entertainment in Yorkshire and, in 2006, Charles was awarded the status of 'industry legend' by Develop, Europe's leading development magazine. All of which makes him a busy man.

Tony Warriner

Following the release of *Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon* in 2003 (the fourth *Broken Sword* game was outsourced), Warriner worked on two *Classic Compendium* titles for the Gizmondo. Released in 2005, they contained traditional board games with the first including chess, draughts, backgammon, a *Connect Four* title and *Othello*. The second had a more Eastern theme and included *Chinese Checkers*, *Mahjong Solitaire* and *Chinese Chess*. In 2006 he produced the single-player puzzle game *Blocster* for 720Games.com and it was released on the PC. More recently he has worked on the *Broken Sword* games for the Wii and DS.

Dave Sykes

Sykes also left Revolution following *The Sleeping Dragon* and left the industry to work in a "proper" programming job writing database software.

Dave Gibbons

Comic book artist Dave Gibbons continues to produce graphic novels and he is currently excited about seeing his most famous creation *Watchmen* make it to the big screen. He has joined forces with Charles Cecil again, producing the graphics for the Wii and DS versions of *Broken Sword*. "It is my first time back [in videogames]," he says. "I've been really thrilled to see how things have come on since *Beneath A Steel Sky* as it was pretty crude, but it did have a great story and great puzzles."

SIX OF THE BEST

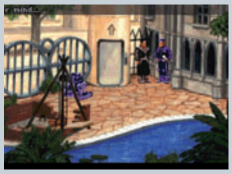
Lure Of The Temptress

Not only was it the debut game for Revolution but it also marked the introduction of the Virtual Theatre engine, which lent high-level artificial intelligence and cemented Revolution's fondness for characterisation. According to Cecil, the game originally didn't include a temptress – nor any luring – but Mirrorsoft's marketing team came up with the game's title late in the day and Revolution was persuaded to insert one.



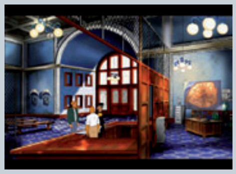
Beneath A Steel Sky

Far larger in scope than *Lure Of The Temptress*, *Beneath A Steel Sky* turned its back on dungeons and propelled gamers into a dystopian future, heavily influenced by cyber-punk movies such as *Mad Max* and *Blade Runner*. Dave Gibbon's graphics and background comic book set the scene for a darkly humoured, politically charged tale that was as difficult as it was innovative. Fans are still screaming out for a sequel and Charles Cecil is considering one.



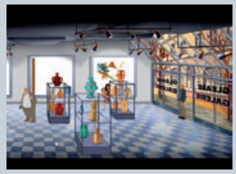
Broken Sword: The Shadow Of The Templars

As the game which introduced George Stobbart and Nico Collard in a murder-mystery set against the backdrop of the Knights Templar, *Broken Sword* proved a smash hit. Building on the success of previous games, it laid on the cinematics from the very beginning and developed into a fascinating subject that would later be taken to the masses by author Dan Brown.



Broken Sword II: The Smoking Mirror

It had always been Revolution's intention to create a *Broken Sword* trilogy. The only question was just when to take the series into 3D. It didn't happen with the second release, leaving the team free to concentrate on sewing up the loose ends and allowing popular and key characters to make triumphant returns. It went on to sell a million copies and gave Revolution the cash it needed to experiment with its 3D switch for the next game.



Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon

Say all you like about whether or not 3D works over 2D, what perhaps split opinion even more about the third *Broken Sword* was the decision to drop the point-and-click interface in favour of direct control. But if Cecil himself has any criticism, it is over the narrative. He continues to feel that it wasn't clear enough and that the topic of the Voynich Manuscript had been merely tagged on rather than properly integrated. We agree.



Broken Sword: The Angel Of Death

The *Angel Of Death* was the climax to the *Broken Sword* story – the trilogy spawning that one-more-go effort – and for this game, production switched to Sumo Digital, Revolution having decided that in-house development was no longer a viable option. Sumo made use of advanced techniques from motion blur to depth of field but that aside, the game was a great way to end, even bringing back the point-and-click interface.





commands together that would have an effect on in-game characters."

The Virtual Theatre engine, which was written for DOS, allowed in-game characters to wander around the game world independently of each other, effectively living their own lives and doing their own thing. As the first game to use it, *Lure Of The Temptress* showed how much of a rival it could be to LucasArts' SCUMM and Sierra's Creative Interpreter.

Initially there were just three staff. "But then we took on Dave Cummins as the lead designer, a local animator called Stephen Oades and Adam Tween from Newcastle who drew the backdrops," says Cecil. "Stephen was working as a clerk at the time but his animations were superb and they really caught our eye. We knew we had to bring him aboard."

Cecil took on the role of project leader and Richard Joseph was employed to produce the game's music. A fourth member of the Revolution team, Norin Carmody, kept the business end of the company going. She would go on to become Cecil's wife.



PRE-INTERNET

With Tony Warriner and Dave Sykes in Hull, freelance staff dotted around the country and Charles Cecil first in Reading then in York, how did they pull everything together? Warriner explains: "I was thinking the other day how we got by in the early days, not just before the internet, but before our computers were even networked together. We used to pass files around by throwing 3.5" floppies to each other at great speed. You could spin them, like a cricket ball, and it was actually quite dangerous if someone missed a catch and got hit in the face by one of these things. Now there's a lost skill, if ever there was one."



Revolution decided to move to the beautiful city of York to try to attract the best talent.

"I always did the high-end game engine stuff," says Warriner. "I like doing the game object and UI side of things. That leaves the low-level side to the real techie programmers. Dave Sykes basically did all the low-level and tools side in the early days. Later, as teams grew, we all got more specialised. I think we kept the quality high by massively overrunning the schedules and budgets."

At the time Warriner and Sykes were working from an office in Hull, the area in which they both lived. Cecil was based in Reading with Activision at the time and he moved north, buying a house in York, 40 miles away. "We chose Hull because it was cheap and because it suited Tony and Dave," says Cecil. "It's a wonderful city and it's great to be based there, but we decided right from the start that eventually we would move the company to York. We always felt that if we were going to attract the best talent then York would prove more attractive to them, as horrible as it sounds, than Hull."

For the move to York to happen, Revolution needed to make a large pot of cash from *Lure Of The Temptress*. Luckily, Brennan came good on his promise of backing and Mirrorsoft agreed to publish the first Revolution Software game, so the team got on with producing the title. With strong competition from Sierra in the point-and-click market, having financial backing from Mirrorsoft was vital.

And then disaster struck. On 5 November 1991, Robert Maxwell fell overboard from his luxury yacht, the 'Lady Ghislaine', which was cruising off the Canary Islands. With the 68-year-old media magnate's body subsequently found floating in the Atlantic Ocean, Mirrorsoft promptly went into receivership and Revolution was left to find a new publisher.

"It was a horrible time," says Cecil. "We were left without a publisher for the game, but thankfully all of the rights were transferred back to us – not only for that but for our second game, *Beneath A Steel Sky*, which we had started to work on. But when Sean Brennan took a position as deputy managing director of Virgin Interactive, the deal was back on. We signed up to Virgin and it was so happy with the sales that it injected enough cash into Revolution to fund the company's expansion, which gave us the opportunity to move to York."

Onwards and upwards

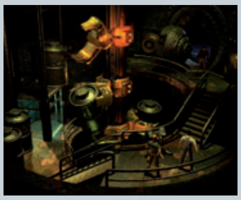
"I think Tony and Dave were glad to move," laughs Cecil. "We were based in this old building opposite Hull station above an arcade – which produced excellent bacon butties. The lift creaked and the whole place was dusty and grimy. It was not the most comfortable of





[PC] *Angel of Death* was the final game of the *Broken Sword* franchise and worth seeking out.

ONE TO AVOID



In Cold Blood (2001)

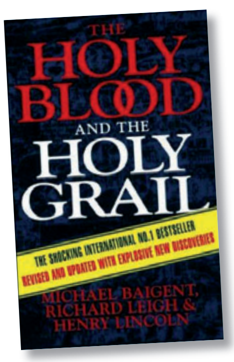
In Cold Blood was never really given a chance. Critically this darkly political game got very mixed reviews and yet when you step back from the preconception that it's an action game, as many did, and see it as an adventure title with action elements, you begin to appreciate it more. You soon become sucked into a tale of destabilisation amid an American-Chinese war.

starts but we produced a great game at the end of it."

Revolution's second game was *Beneath A Steel Sky*, released in 1994. It was ambitious, not only in its scale but in its visuals. Dave Gibbons, the comic book artist best known for his work on *Watchmen*, worked on the game's graphics, drawing the characters by hand and converting them into pixels on his son's Amiga. Gibbons also produced a comic which was bundled with the game and replaced the traditional manual.

A design document was needed to cope with the size of the game – it was four times larger than *Lure Of The Temptress* – and it meant the game took a long time to produce, with many hours of overtime required by the team. "We all enjoyed it, though," says Warriner. "You can see how *Steel Sky* was born when you look at where our office was based when we started work on it. Hull had a hard industrial edge, which was actually quite inspiring. York on the other hand is a very historical city. I've been here ten years and I'm still learning about events that happened 500 years ago. It's no surprise that *Broken Sword* sprung up from all of this. We're surrounded by history, here."

> **"It was promoted as a Metal Gear Solid beater but it was not like that"**
>
> CHARLES CECIL ON IN COLD BLOOD



This book stirred up conspiracy theories about the Knights Templar, later used in *Broken Sword* and *The Da Vinci Code*.

Indeed, *Broken Sword* was the game which truly made Revolution Software's name. It was released in 1996, again by Virgin Interactive, and it was a period of rapid growth for the firm. "When we moved to York we had six or seven people initially, but we doubled that for *Beneath A Steel Sky*," says Charles. "By the time we had started on *Broken Sword*, there were around 30 people in the office plus around 30 contractors. It was quite some team."

Revolution saw no need in ripping up the success of the first two games and so *Broken Sword* became the developer's third point-and-click, costing £1 million. For the first time, Revolution ported the game to a console – it made its debut on the PlayStation (albeit it with less impressive results due to the difficulty of replicating the mouse control).

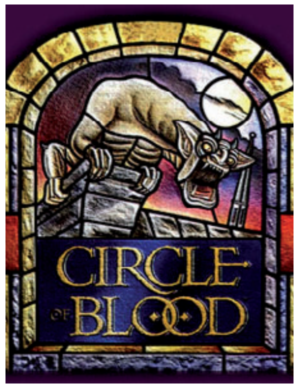
The success of the first *Broken Sword* meant the Virtual Theatre Engine was dusted off for a fourth time for *Broken Sword II: The Smoking Mirror*, a title which also appeared on the PlayStation. Again sales were great but, before producing the third game in the *Broken Sword* series, Revolution created *In Cold Blood* for the PC and PlayStation – with mixed results. "With *In Cold Blood*, we merged action and adventure. It got some excellent reviews, and some rotten ones," says Charles. "We re-released it recently on GoodOldGames.com and it has gone down really well. The intention was to write an adventure with a little more drama. So we put in fairly simple combat. The problem was that if people wanted a high-octane shooter they would be disappointed, but those who didn't expect a shoot-'em-up loved it. It was the first time we had had any bad reviews, though, and I think a lot of it was because the message in the published game was

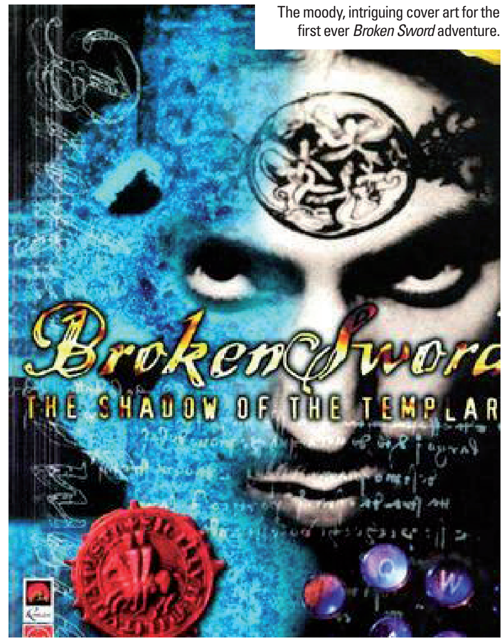
TIMELINE

- **1989** CHARLES CECIL MEETS WITH TONY WARRINER AND DAVE SYKES TO DISCUSS SETTING UP A NEW SOFTWARE COMPANY.
- **1990** WORK STARTS ON LURE OF THE TEMPTRESS AND THE GAME SIGNED TO MIRRORSOFT.
- **1991** MIRRORSOFT'S ROBERT MAXWELL DIES. THE GAME SWITCHES PUBLISHER TO VIRGIN INTERACTIVE.
- **1992** LURE OF THE TEMPTRESS RELEASED.
- **1993** WORK STARTS ON BENEATH A STEEL SKY. REVOLUTION RELOCATES FROM HULL TO YORK.
- **1994** BENEATH A STEEL SKY RELEASED.
- **1996** BROKEN SWORD: THE SHADOW OF THE TEMPLARS RELEASED.
- **1997** BROKEN SWORD II: THE SMOKING MIRROR RELEASED.
- **2001** IN COLD BLOOD RELEASED TO MIXED REVIEWS.
- **2003** BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON RELEASED – MOVES SERIES INTO 3D.
- **2003** CHARLES CECIL ENROLS ON AN OPEN UNIVERSITY COURSE IN FILM CREATION.
- **2004** REVOLUTION REALISES DEVELOPMENT MODEL HAS TO CHANGE. SCALES DOWN IN-HOUSE STAFF.
- **2005** REVOLUTION OUTSOURCES FOURTH BROKEN SWORD GAME TO SUMO DIGITAL.
- **2006** BROKEN SWORD: THE ANGEL OF DEATH RELEASED.
- **2006** CHARLES CECIL BECOMES A CONSULTANT ON THE DA VINCI CODE GAME.
- **2007** REVOLUTION IS NOW A ONE-MAN BAND (CHARLES CECIL) AND THE IDEA FOR WII AND DS VERSIONS OF BROKEN SWORD EMERGES.
- **2009** BROKEN SWORD: SHADOW OF THE TEMPLARS – THE DIRECTOR'S CUT.



[Amiga] *Lure of the Temptress* was a fun and humourous debut.





The moody, intriguing cover art for the first ever *Broken Sword* adventure.





[Amiga] Revolution Software was keen to clean up the competition.

incorrect. It was promoted as a *Metal Gear Solid* beater but it was not like that."

Revolution attracted more controversy with the third *Broken Sword*. While worked on by many staff – "There would often be over 40 people in the office; at all hours, too," recalls Warriner – it experimented with a 3D point-and-click adventure. Despite critical acclaim, the approach split the fanbase. Revolution had long realised that 2D point-and-clicks were struggling in the US and the bulk of their sales were coming from Europe. The PlayStation versions were invaluable in taking the games into the mainstream but even they struggled away from the Continent. Warriner said it was getting to the stage were American retailers were not taking the games in the first place. A switch to 3D was an attempt to broaden the audience while taking advantage of the latest technology and expectations.

"A lot of people felt a lot was lost in the move to 3D," says Cecil. "But it was something we needed to do at the time. We read the reviews, we heard what people thought and there were underlying tensions, especially because when you move to 3D you have to add certain other elements and some don't like that. But now I feel there is a market for both. *Tomb Raider* came out in 1996 and everyone thought 3D was the only way forward, but what that's done is alienate some people with increasingly difficult controls. What 2D games do is make the playing of games that bit simpler and they can be better for it."

The third game was published by THQ, since Virgin was being sold off by Viacom and there were issues with distribution. THQ continued its relationship with Revolution for *The Sleeping Dragon*'s follow-up, *The Angel Of Death*, which did away with some of the third game's 'innovations'. It returned to inventory-based rather than physical puzzles, the pressure of having to perform fast actions having been found to have got in the way. Gamers were also given a choice: to play it as a point-and-click or assume direct control.

Revolution outsourced development of the fourth game to Sumo Digital because Cecil had closed the production side of his software house in order to concentrate on design. So rather than produce the title in-house, Cecil used his Revolution team to write the scripts and draft the game and used Sumo's programming skills to put it all together. It helped that some ex-Revolution staff joined Sumo to help with the project.

There was no room for a console version this time. Revolution held talks with publisher THQ which agreed that, in order for *The Angel Of Death* to shine, it was necessary for the game to be PC only. That way Sumo would be able to push the technology boundaries and produce the best-looking game possible. One upshot of this was that Sumo used a different 3D engine – its own – rather than Criterion's Renderware which was used in the third instalment. Again it sold well on its release in 2006.

As for today, well Revolution has gone back to the original *Broken Sword*, dusted it off and re-released it with two hours of extra content and enhanced visuals for the Wii and DS. And nowadays Charles Cecil *is* Revolution Software. Everyone who works on projects for the company is employed as a freelance. "It works much better than having in-house staff," says Cecil. "In 2004, the landscape for development changed. Due to the costs involved, having an assembled team working on one game is risky – if it's canned, everything can be wasted." The current system means Revolution can produce games for less money and less risk.

And as for the memories… "What we saw over the years," says Warriner, "was the competition from Sierra and LucasArts dropping away. We were left just competing against other genres. These days I'd be delighted to see these guys back in the market, as that would signal that our once very popular genre was truly back."

Revolution by name, revolution by nature. The company shook up the point-and-click adventure genre.



ROOM FOR A LITTLE ONE?

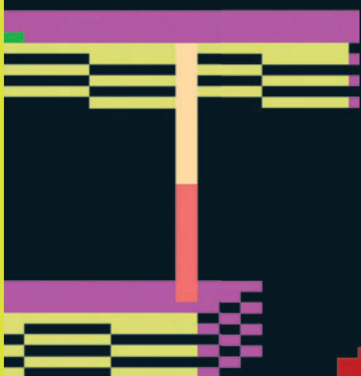
A few years ago, many believed small development companies were finished. Big console games had multi-million pound budgets and the perception was that firms had to employ 300 people and a business development department. Indeed, Tony Warriner tells Retro Gamer that Revolution was once told it couldn't work with a certain platform holder as it didn't have the right 'financial profile'.

He explains: "It was a bad time, and many smaller developers disappeared. Recently there has been an enormous shift. Hardcore console gaming has run into some major problems associated with high costs of development and a subsequent inability to innovate at those cost levels. At the same time, we have the Nintendo consoles which are, on the one hand, proving far more popular with game players, and are cheaper to develop for. It's been amazing to do our *Broken Sword Director's Cut* game for DS and Wii. Such an unexpected opportunity. We also see digital distribution taking off, as well as what Apple is achieving with its iPhone. It's all great for small creative developers again.



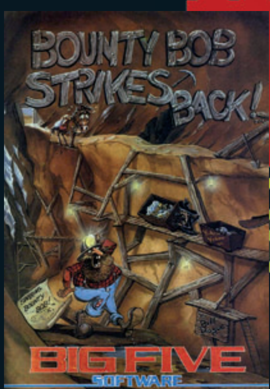
THE MAKING OF...

BOUNTY BOB STRIKES BACK!





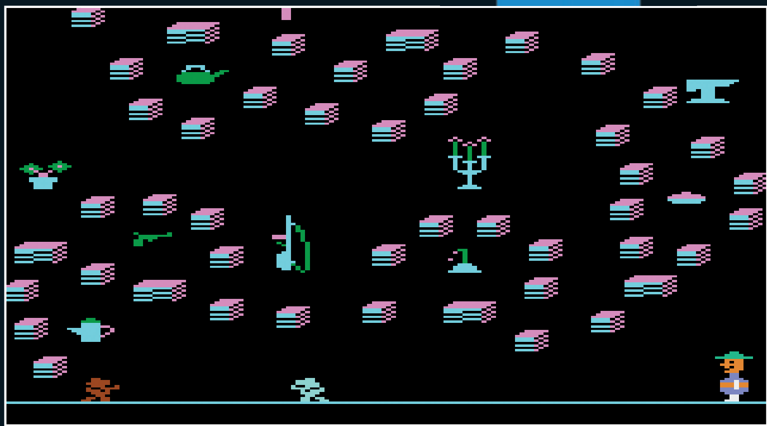
With Miner 2049er a worldwide hit, a sequel should have propelled Big Five Software into the big leagues, but things don't always turn out as planned. Bill Hogue tells Craig Grannell about the troublesome birth of Bounty Bob Strikes Back, and how it spelled the end for the company he founded



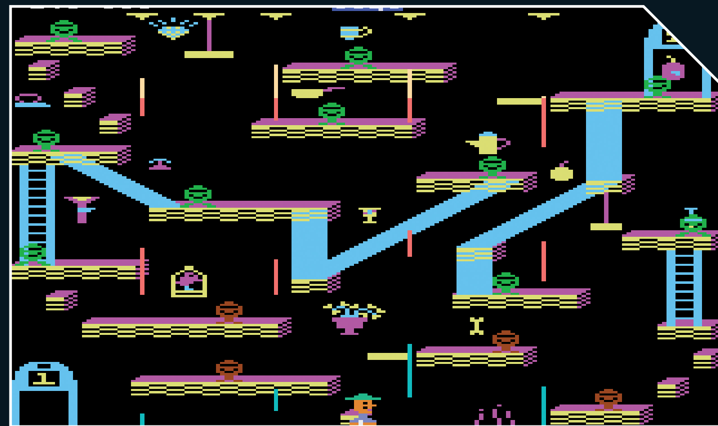


IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** BIG FIVE SOFTWARE/ US GOLD
- » **DEVELOPER:** BIG FIVE SOFTWARE
- » **RELEASED:** 1984 (ATARI 400/800)
- » **PLATFORM:** ATARI 400/800; CONVERTED TO ATARI 5200, C64, SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD CPC, BBC MICRO
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORM GAME
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1 FOR MOST VERSIONS; A SMALL FORTUNE FOR THE ATARI 5200 CART



» [Atari 800] Bill says level 15, Yukon's Revenge, should have been called Curtis's Revenge: "I remember him being so pleased with himself at how difficult it was for me to get through it!"



» [Atari 800] New features, such as acid rain, pepper the levels. "We wanted to ensure the game held the player's interest until the final level," says Bill.

Big Five Software's multi-award-winning, genre-defining platform game *Miner 2049er* took the USA by storm on its release in 1982, and although the title was less well known in Europe, it still sold well enough to be regarded as something of a hit. The game (subject of a Retro Gamer making-of back in issue 41) is a curious mix of *Donkey Kong* and *Pac-Man*, almost akin to a more frenetic and complex *Manic Miner*, and it's equally demanding and unforgiving.

With his first colour game a confirmed success, creator Bill Hogue turned his attention to a follow-up. However, this time the game's arrival wouldn't be quick, and fate intervened to ensure the story wouldn't provide another happy ending.

The signs were ominous from the very beginning. Bill notes that while attempting to create an even better game than *Miner 2049er*, he and colleague Curtis Mikolyski began work on two entirely different projects that rapidly ground to a halt – a far cry from *Miner 2049er*'s speedy gestation. "The first one was a vertically scrolling game where Bounty Bob had become a fireman and was running up a building to save people, pets and trinkets," remembers Bill about the game that was dubbed *Scraper Caper*. "After some development, we decided the limits of vertical scrolling weren't something we wanted to live with and so we shelved the project," he continues, adding that the decision seems foolish today, considering the amount of work they'd put into the game.

Given Bill's fondness for arcade games, obvious to anyone who's sampled his TRS-80 output or *Miner 2049er*, we ask whether *Scraper Caper* had anything in common with popular vertical scroller *Elevator Action*. "Curiously, I did have a full-size *Elevator Action* in my home during the time Big Five was folding," admits Bill. He was considering doing a quick, part-time job to convert it for a home-computer format, but the deal was never closed, and the game didn't particularly inspire *Scraper Caper*, which came earlier.

Arcade-based inspiration was more apparent in the next aborted *Miner 2049er* follow-up, which was canned before even being named. "That one was along the lines of Atari's *Crystal Castles*," recalls Bill. "I'd spent a lot of time developing a 3D look to the playfield, along with a full level editor that Curtis had developed a bunch of levels with." The gameplay had Bounty Bob being chased by evil fireballs, but the team again decided it wasn't what it was searching for to top *Miner 2049er*.

It was to be 'third time lucky' when Bill and Curtis finally settled on a more linear progression from *Miner 2049er* to the game that would become *Bounty Bob Strikes Back*. However, although the sequel is superficially very similar to its predecessor, Bill maintains that there are plenty of important differences. "Keeping the gameplay similar seemed the right thing to do, since everyone who played *Miner 2049er* loved the concept," he says. "But *Bounty Bob Strikes Back* is a lot more technically advanced. With *Miner 2049er*, we were constrained by the 16KB ROM limit that the Atari 800 had. Once chip manufacturers started developing bank-selected ROMs, we

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

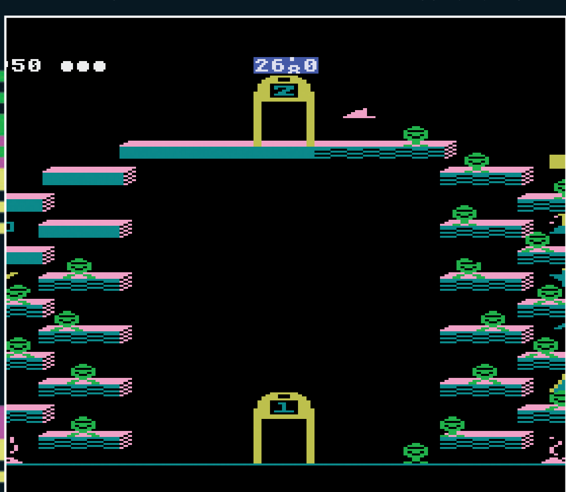
ATTACK FORCE
SYSTEM: TRS-80
YEAR: 1980

ROBOT ATTACK (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: TRS-80
YEAR: 1981

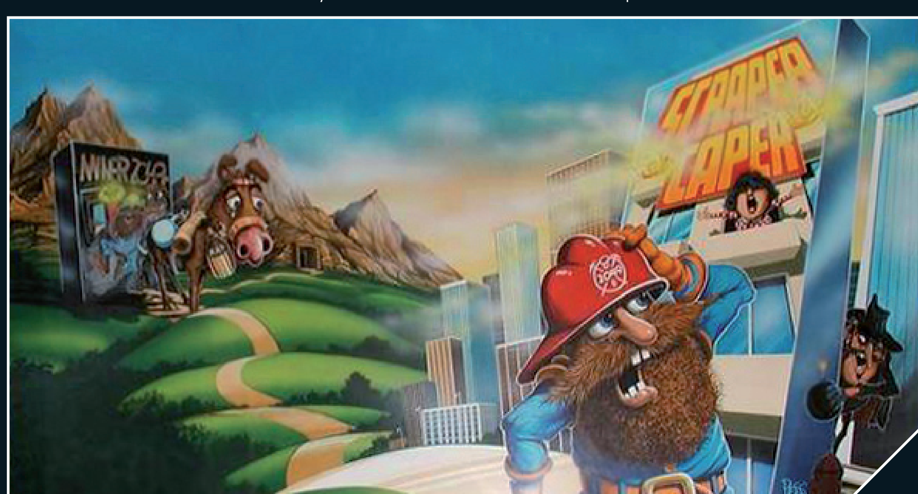
MINER 2049ER
SYSTEM: ATARI 400/800
YEAR: 1982



» [Atari 800] *Bounty Bob Strikes Back* has occasional bonus levels to stop you going crazy.



» Scott Ross's artwork in low-res JPEG format is sadly all that remains of initial stabs at a *Miner 2049er* sequel.



THE MAKING OF…

BOUNTY BOB STRIKES BACK

Bill's favourite levels

LEVEL 3: THE SUCTION TUBES

"This is the first level where the suction tubes show up, and they're the first real big surprise waiting for a player to discover in *Bounty Bob Strikes Back*," comments Bill, referring to the devices that suck up an unwitting Bob and deposit him dangerously close to roaming mutants. "I still love the animation – Bob frowns as he gets sucked in, along with a cool sucking sound!"



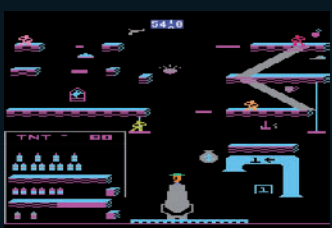
LEVEL 20: MOBILE SUCTION UNIT

Bill reveals the challenge in coding the huge moving suction tube: "The Atari had five players and missiles – objects that overlay the playfield. The top of the suction unit is playfield and the vertical part is a player. On other levels, Bob uses three sprites and the mutants two; here, one mutant is sacrificed for the tube. It's funny how the power of 'display list interrupts' seemed so awesome at the time!"



LEVEL 22: ADVANCED CANNON

"I guess this would seem somewhat familiar to you if you're a player of *Miner 2049er*," says Bill of this explosive and tricky level. "But on closer examination, there's a lot that's different, because this one's packed full of new special equipment. And if you overload the cannon, there's one more difference for you – the cannon launches, flying off the top of the screen!"



LEVEL 24: MUTANTS ON THE MOVE

In the game's previous levels, mutant movement is entirely predictable, because they merely march back and forth along fixed routes, but that all changes for the penultimate challenge. "This one required a fairly big change to my code, to allow the mutants to move up and down ladders and slides," says Bill, then joking: "Although considering today's games, that statement sounds weak!"



decided to cram 40KB into our cartridge, so it would have more gameplay than any other cartridge. This also had the side benefit of making it difficult to pirate the firmware!"

To ensure the game was as efficient as possible, Bill decided to ditch the process used for *Miner 2049er*. "For that game, I used the Atari assembler package. We would sketch out the levels on grid paper and then enter the co-ordinates of each piece into the code. For *Bounty Bob Strikes Back*, I decided to write my own cross-assembler system to speed up the process. I'd enter the code on a Radio Shack 68000-based Model 16, assemble it, and then download it to a monitor I had running on an Atari with RAM-based bank-selecting hardware."

As already noted, the basic gameplay of *Bounty Bob Strikes Back* is almost identical to that of *Miner 2049er* – Bob has to walk over every platform while avoiding deadly mutants that can temporarily be made 'stompable' by collecting one of the objects littered about each level. "But we knew the game had to look a bit different from *Miner 2049er*, and so we created a 3D look for the framework of the levels," says Bill. "And since the special equipment in *Miner 2049er* was so much fun, we knew we had to load the game up with all sorts of new gizmos."

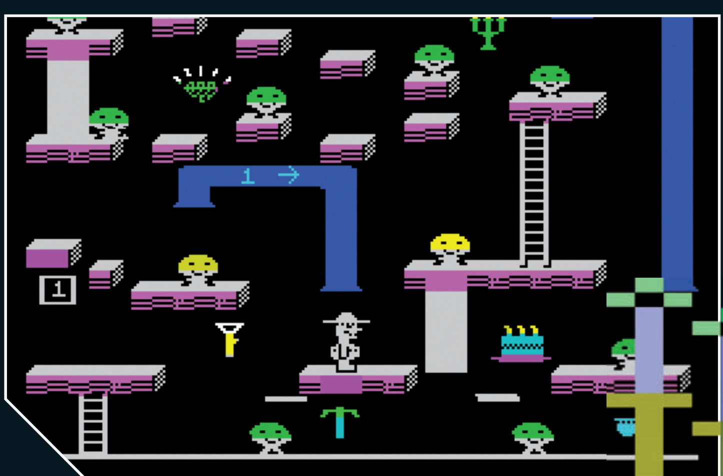
Joining the slides, hydraulic lift, cannon and transporters seen in *Miner 2049er* were suction tubes, acid rain and increasingly devious layouts over the course of the game's 25 levels. "Curtis designed those, and I wrote a full-blown level editor that enabled him to position each framework piece and mutant," says Bill. "And if it wasn't for the 40KB ROM limit, we'd have probably carried on going, adding even more levels."

Given the complexity of many of the new levels, *Miner 2049er*'s most hated feature wasn't carried over: the fixed-length jump. Instead, nudging the joystick after Bob jumps vertically enables smaller jumps to be made. "This gave Curtis the ability to put the framework pieces almost anywhere he wanted to," explains Bill. "And it also provided a new skill to be learned for returning players. I very much like the way this turned out – going back to play *Miner 2049er* seems very limiting regarding what you feel you should be able to do."

Despite this minor concession to the player, *Bounty Bob Strikes Back* is still an astonishingly tough game, and so we wondered whether, in hindsight, Bill would have made Bounty Bob a bit more robust, or possibly the platforming less reliant on pixel-perfect precision? "It wasn't until later, when we started getting feedback from players that we realised the game was a wee bit hard," says Bill. "I'm guessing that most people weren't as good at playing games as Curtis was planning for!"

Bill confirms that the various cheat codes buried within the game were intentionally included when the team committed to the ROM images, but the secrecy behind them soon evaporated: "Later on, we just gave up and started including a printed sheet in the package, describing the cheat mode, so players could try more levels." A little extra breathing space was also provided in the form of two bonus levels and a couple of 'rest stops', which seasoned gamers could polish off with ease, rather than smashing a joystick to pieces in frustration at yet another failed attempt. "We felt that if you got that far into the game, you deserved a break," confirms Bill. "I'll bet not too many people use the cheat codes to go to those levels, though."

» [ZX Spectrum] Starved of *Miner 2049er*, Spectrum owners got one of the prettiest and most playable *Bounty Bob Strikes Back* conversions of them all.



» [C64] "I wrote the C64 version, and it used much of the same code as the Atari game," comments Bill. "Hey – finally, some reusable code!"







» [Atari 800] The elaborate high-score table showcases Bill's infatuation with colour and pushing the Atari hardware.



» [BBC Micro] This is as far as we got on the flickering mess of a BBC Micro conversion before our eyeballs exploded.

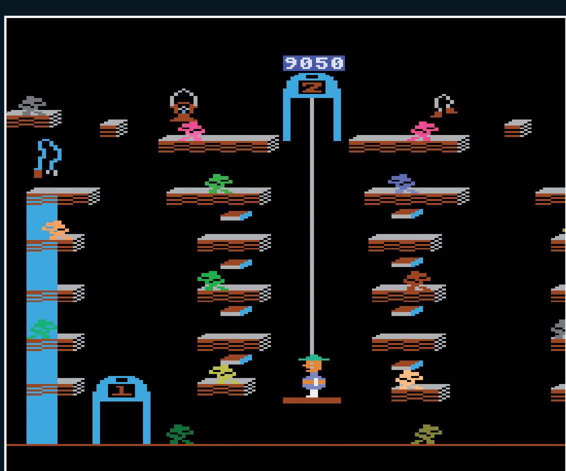
Outside of the game itself, *Bounty Bob Strikes Back* became known for additional touches peppered throughout, from an early videogame example of semi-hidden 'warps' (triggers are revealed by end-of-game messages) to one of the most elaborate high-score tables of any 8-bit production. Names are entered in a factory-like input screen that's almost like a mini-game in itself, and then characters are lifted into place on the board by a flock of multicoloured birds. "The warps were added because we thought the game was a bit too difficult, and so this was our way of giving players a short cut to later levels," says Bill. "As for the high-score table, you have to remember that *Miner 2049er* was my first colour game, and so I tried to put as many different colours in as I could. For *Bounty Bob Strikes Back*, I went down the same path with the factory high-score input screen." Bill mentions his love for display list interrupts came in handy for this component: "I used variable DLIs. You'll notice each of the five coloured birds – five Atari 'players' – is carrying a white letter. So until the letter is dropped off, it is a 'player', and it gets redrawn into the playfield as the bird flies off."

> "Everyone loved the game, except for the fact it was too hard"

On completion, *Bounty Bob Strikes Back* looked like it had all the components needed to be another resounding success, and this time there was also a major advertising push in Europe, courtesy of US Gold, who seemed to suggest the game would be akin to the second coming. "Unfortunately, the sales of the game didn't compare to what we'd done on *Miner 2049er*, that's for sure," says Bill. "Everyone really loved the game, except for the fact that it was just too hard. But *Bounty Bob Strikes Back* came out towards the end of the Atari era, and so it didn't have the sales *Miner 2049er* did."

Soon after the game's release, Big Five became another casualty of the volatile nature of the videogame market in Eighties USA. "We started scaling things back, from our office to my house, and then everyone moved on to other things, and I finally closed the company," explains Bill. But despite *Bounty Bob Strikes Back* being a full-stop for Big Five, Bill rightly remains proud of his creation, and notes that it surprises him how the game continues to generate so much interest by fans worldwide. "And it's cool to see unopened *Bounty Bob* cartridges for the Atari 5200 pop up on eBay every now and again and sell for hundreds of dollars," adds Bill. "I've actually sold a few myself this way. I wonder if the buyers in those transactions ever suspected their purchases came from me…"

» [PC] Play the Bounty Bob games legally via Bill's custom emulator, available for free from bigfivesoftware.com.



» [Amstrad CPC] The Amstrad version was surprisingly bright and cheerful and looks far nicer than the drab C64 effort (we'll admit that the latter features better controls though).





Miner designer

Artist Scott Ross (scottross.com) was responsible for Bounty Bobs's cover art: "The videogame market was just starting, and I knew nothing about it. I probably talked to my agent about *Miner 2049er* for a few minutes before sitting down in front of a sheet of paper and starting to draw. Every prospector I ever saw in a movie had a beard, a lighted helmet, a pickaxe and a burrow, hence the design. I never looked at the game, nor knew much about it, and so just did what I felt like doing!

"My agent showed Bill Hogue my ideas and then called me the next day with the go-ahead. There was no big discussion about what Bob looked like, and I'd no idea I'd draw the guy so many times in the future – *Miner 2049er* was the most licensed game of its day, and I did *Scraper Caper*'s art and loads of ads. *Bounty Bob Strikes Back* isn't mine, though.

"I went on to create dozens of game boxes over a six-year period, and then it was over and I haven't done any since!"

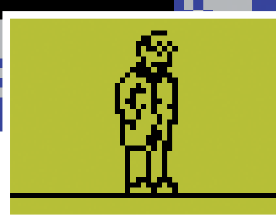
THE CLASSIC GAME



When you consider that school was the one place many of us couldn't wait to escape from when we were kids (as it was clearly obstructing the one thing any of us really cared about in life: playing our beloved computer games), seeing the appeal of coming home after six hours' worth of rule abiding and conforming to simply do more of the same on our Spectrums was a baffling proposition. But for those gamers bright enough to take a punt on *Skool Daze*, they would soon discover that there was a lot more to the game than just rules, learning and lollygagging.



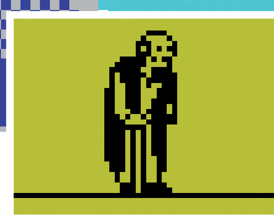
Mr Wacker
Mr Wacker is the governor, the big dog, the headmaster. And is the one person in the school you don't cross. He's also called Mr Wacker for good reason: he's holding a cane. You do the math.



Mr Rockitt
Mr Rockitt is the school science teacher. You can tell he's a science teacher by the fact that he wears glasses and a lab coat – not that we're trying to style-stereotype science teachers or anything here.



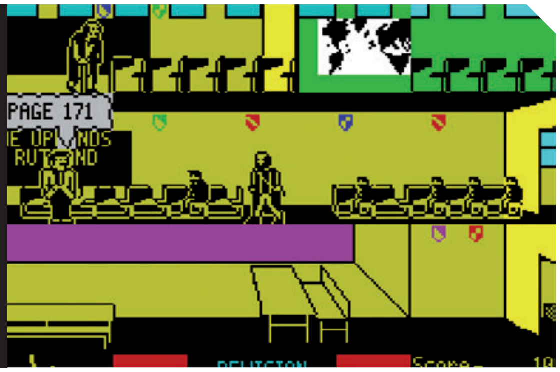
Mr Withit
The geography master reminds us of one of those slightly maverick teachers whom the boys look up to and the girls fawn over. He struts around the school with full head of hair, and both hands stuffed into his pockets.



Mr Creak
We question how good a history teacher Mr Creak really is when he can't even remember the day he was born. To coax a section of the code from Creak's brain, you have to jog his memory by telling him his date of birth.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

WHY IS IT A CLASSIC?



A class of its own

Skool Daze offered the chance to play school rebel without actually getting shouted at. You played Eric, who is trying to get his hands on a harmful school report before his parents catch wind of it and donate his Spectrum to a skip. The document is locked away in a maximum security safe in the teacher's lounge, and requires a four-part code – which has been entrusted to the four teachers in the school – to open. In its day, *Skool Daze* was a wonderfully original title, and like *The Great Escape*, required the player to do their anarchistic wrongdoings while appearing to comply with the rules of their militant surroundings.

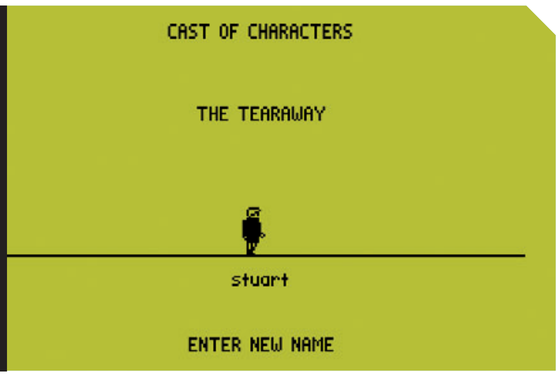
BEST CHARACTER



The kids are all right

One of the best aspects of *Skool Daze* is the charming environment you get to create havoc in. As well as having to compete with the jobsworthian teachers, who will pull you up on practically everything, and dole out lines like they're battling with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, you had to watch out for the petulant kids as well. There's your typical school boffin, called Einstein, who acts like a prefect; the school bully, Angel Face, who continually tries to get you into hot water; and school joker, Boy Wander, who plays pranks and scrawls anarchist chalk messages on the blackboard for everyone to smirk at.

BEST BOSS



You name it you got it

While a simple feature, an ingenious and very popular addition to Skool Daze was the clever option to rename the teachers and more focal children in the school. This brilliant little option allowed kids to substitute the nondescript characters in the game with the names of their own school chums and teachers; thus personalising the game and making the act of firing catapult at the patrolling tutors all the more satisfying. Even better, though, was the fact that you could use words that'd likely cause your grandmother to pass out through shock, and likely to get your copy of the game confiscated by unimpressed parents.

BEST MOVE



A+ for art

The faux 3D visuals in *Skool Daze* are truly superb, particularly considering the humble Spectrum's graphical capabilities. Each of the many classrooms in the school is easy to distinguish, and the teachers and pupils look great too. Actually, at times, *Skool Daze* almost looks like a virtual comic strip, especially with the teachers and students barking out words via neat little speech bubbles. And even though the game plays out across one level, there's an impressive amount of variety in there. The presentation is superb, and the entire game feels wonderfully polished and lovingly crafted throughout.

BEST STAGE



The secret of success

To accomplish your mission you must open the safe and steal your school report. Only the four teachers patrolling the school corridors know the combination to unlock it, and to get them to spill the beans you have to shoot all of the shields scattered around the school. Doing this seems to leak an invisible truth gas into the corridors so that whenever you knock a teacher over with your catapult they blab the code. All except Mr Creak that is, who's so old his memory requires a little bit of jump-start. Once you cracked the safe, though, you then have to hit all the shields again to cover your tracks.

STANDOUT MOMENT



Rulez R made 2 B broken

Enabling Eric to steal his school report requires helping him complete his mission while adhering to the rules of school. Getting 10,000 lines will see him expelled, so to keep him on the right side of his teachers you have to ensure he attends all of his lessons (his timetable is handily shown at the foot of the screen), is never late for class, always finds a seat (which, because of overcrowded classrooms, can be problematic) and isn't caught sitting, firing his catapult and loitering inside any of the classrooms during recess. While the rules might sound annoying, they actually add to the appeal and enjoyment of the game.



What the press said… ages ago

Crash 93%

"From the moment you see *Skool Daze*, you fall in love with it, because the graphics are tremendous. The whole playing area is alive with action."

Your Sinclair 8/10

"Not so sophisticated in plot as its [successor], this is still a Sinclair classic with its good humoured style."

What we think

While the sequel is brilliant we still enjoy the original; it's the game that kicked off the whole school-sim genre. It's difficult not to get wrapped up in *Skool Daze*. It looks great and the environment is a joy to play (or should that be learn?) in.



IN THE KNOW

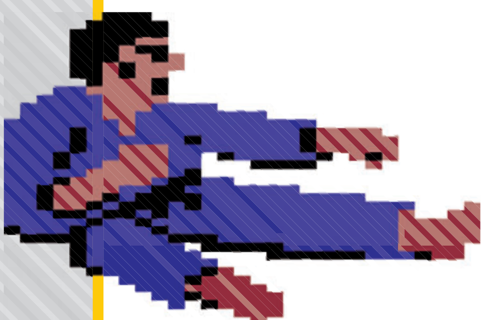
- **PLATFORM:** SPECTRUM
- **DEVELOPER:** MICROSPHERE
- **PUBLISHER:** MICROSPHERE
- **RELEASED:** 1985
- **GENRE:** ACTION
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID



ARCHER MACLEAN

He no longer writes a column for us (boo, hiss) and he hasn't released a game in a while, so what is Archer Maclean up to these days? The short answer is that he and his Awesome Play team are putting the finishing touches to a new Wii racing game. For the longer answer, read on...

WITH A CAREER in games that spans 25 years, and counting, Archer Maclean has continued to demonstrate a flair for getting the very best out of computers and games consoles. *Dropzone* pushed the power of the Atari 800 to its limits, *IK+* allowed beat-'em-up fans to partake in a comically brutal *ménage à trois* on their C64s, and *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker* wowed the snooker loopy with its slick 3D visuals and compelling gameplay. Stuart Hunt caught up with Archer recently to discuss his time in the industry, lift the lid on some of his games, and find out more about the exciting new Wii game he's working on.



RETRO GAMER: Hi Archer, I know you're incredibly busy at the moment putting the final touches to your new Wii racing game, so thank you for giving up your time to speak to us today. To start with, we always like to ask our interviewees about their school days.

ARCHER MACLEAN: Summarising my school days or the dozen lives I lead won't be easy, but hey, here goes! I went to various schools in UK, Hong Kong and New Zealand, and spent one year on a boat with no school at all, which was great! My earliest recollections of school as a toddler were in the late Sixties, early Seventies. Even at a very young age I can remember always wanting to find out how things worked, and to build stuff myself. I had a lot of Meccano, and a lot of Lego, most of which I acquired through various shrewd business deals in the school playground, often in exchange for my brother's Action Man parts which he later donated. So I was always constructing things, breaking things apart, and occasionally I would disappear into a room for days and produce something amazing like a huge machine made out of Meccano that could actually weave me a Doctor Who Scarf as popularised in the mid-Seventies by Tom Baker. I later found out I had reinvented the Jacquard Loom done 200 years earlier. Even today I only sleep a few hours a night and I don't tend to watch much TV, and instead I am doing something all the time, I've been like that all my life.

RG: So were you the type of kid who would dismantle the family toaster just to find out how it worked?

AM: Oh yeah I did all that. I remember distinctly in 1972 taking apart a TV set and removing all these funny little coloured components that I later learnt were resistors, capacitors, diodes and various semiconductors. I didn't really know what they were then, but around about the same time I remember my parents giving me a versatile electronics kit which consisted of a plastic board with discrete components mounted on it and clever little connectors on everything. You followed a wiring diagram to join them all up and make various projects, and if you didn't kill yourself plugging it into the mains it might produce a beep or flash LEDs. I made all the usual things like an audio amplifier, then crystal radio, then hooked up the amp to the radio and wired in speakers, and so on. But within a couple of months I grew bored of building the preset gadgets and so started to try and understand how it all worked, and started reading masses of books on electronics. And I started buying the then popular electronics magazines and building the gadgets featured in them. One of the first things I built was a small

DOWNLOAD THE PODCAST

Want the full lowdown on Archer's interview? Then head on over to **www.imagine-publishing.co.uk/podcasts.php**



ARCHER MACLEAN TIMELINE

Dropzone 1984
International Karate 1986
World Karate Championship 1986
International Karate + 1987
Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker 1991
Archer Maclean's Pool 1992
Super Dropzone 1992
Dropzone GB 1993
Jimmy White's 2: Cueball 1998
Jimmy White's: Cueball World 2000
Super Dropzone (GBA) 2002
IK+ (Linkup for GBA) 2003
Pool Paradise 2004
Archer Maclean's Mercury 2005
SpeedZone 2009

"I only sleep a few hours a night and I don't watch much TV… instead I am doing something all the time"
Archer Maclean

radio, and then an even smaller one, and so on and on, until I eventually managed to cram one into a matchbox with a jack plug socket for the tiny earpiece. Having long hair at the time, I could hide the fact I was running a wire up under my school shirt and no one knew I was listening to Radio 1 in the middle of Latin lessons or something equally useful. This was ten years before Walkmans appeared!

RG: So you were self-taught in electronics?

AM: I guess so, but I did ask a lot of questions of a lot of people and probably drove most people mad. For various reasons in about 1975 I didn't like being at home so I went out after school and got a part-time job working for a local company in Brentwood, Essex called Norman Miller's TV Repair Shop. It was the first interesting part-time job I had had as a teenager and I learnt very quickly from its owner, Norman Miller, who was brilliant at teaching someone like me how to do things.

Anyway, one day a guy walks into the shop called William Poel. He lived locally and had just set up an entrepreneurial electronics company called Ambit International, which, a few years later, evolved into Amsoft – the Amstrad CPC games software guys. Ambit was in downtown Brentwood, within spitting distance of where Amstrad's HQ now is, and the building where Sir Alan was (until recently) running his empire. So from '76 onwards William Poel took me under his wing and was like a mentor. I used to work there all the hours I could, just learning and building things, including some pretty special gadgets for a certain government ministry. I was earning pretty silly cash for all this, which in turn allowed me to spend unfeasibly large amounts of money on computer hardware, as a school kid.

RG: When was it you really started to take an interest in videogames?

AM: I once wrote up an article for RG about my earliest religious moment playing an Atari *Pong* machine in 1972, at a seaside resort. Then, in 1973/4/5 whilst working as an overworked underpaid paperboy for £2 a week delivering heavy newspapers six days a week, I would ask the newsagent for a discount on all the electronics magazines he stocked. Anyway, about then they were regularly following the exploding market for arcade games and the earliest home computer consoles coming out of Atari in California, and often featuring its dynamic leader, Nolan Bushnell. I was just amazed that you could go into an arcade in '72, '73 and by '74, '75 you could play very similar-looking versions of those games at home on various Atari 2600 and

* FIVE TO PLAY

IK+



Year Released: 1986 **Featured Version:** C64

WHILE THE ONE-ON-ONE beat-'em-up genre really came into its own during the 16-bit generation, *IK+* proved that the genre could still dazzle without the aid of fireballs, dragon punches, 200,389,675-hit combos and acts of depravity. Thanks to its jaw-dropping visuals, tight controls and addictive two-player dust-ups, *IK+* remains one the finest martial arts games ever released. Building on the brilliance of *International Karate*, *IK+* added an extra computer fighter to the mix to allow two human-controlled fighters to either dish out some punishment to a computer opponent, or one Billy-zilch-mate to take on two computer combatants. As well as its unique three-fighter action, *IK+*'s quality was bolstered by lavish visuals, a great soundtrack, and various game modes and mini-games, helping make it one of the most addictive two-player games to ever find a release on 8-bit micros.

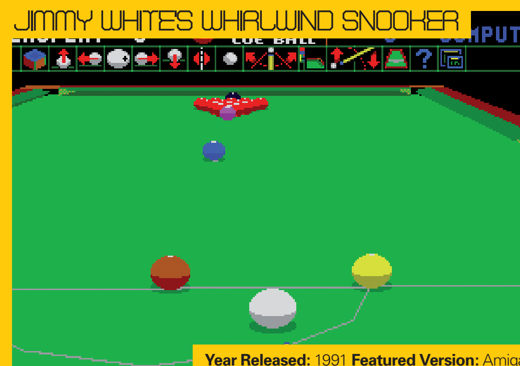
DROPZONE



Year Released: 1984 **Featured Version:** C64

ARCHER TELLS US that he started writing *Dropzone* while studying for a scary-sounding degree. Most classic 8-bit games' inspiration can be traced back to the incandescent glow of the arcades, and in *Dropzone*'s case the muse was Eugene Jarvis's side-scrolling space blaster, *Defender*. Playing the role of a *Jetpac*-type character, it was your mission to traverse the cluttered surface of one of Jupiter's moons and blast away waves of nasty aliens while helping to escort scientists to safety. With responsive controls, smooth scrolling and impressive visuals, *Dropzone* showcased Archer's flair for tapping into the full potential of the host hardware to conjure up addictive games.

JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER



Year Released: 1991 **Featured Version:** Amiga

THE CONCEPT OF a 3D snooker game had been swilling around Archer's head back when he was writing *Dropzone*, but he knew the 8-bit machines of the day wouldn't be able to achieve the high-quality 3D visuals he wanted to create. The arrival of 16-bit home computers finally allowed Archer to put his idea into action, and the results were impressive. With the slickest 3D graphics of the day, flawless controls, realistic ball physics and the chance to actually play Jimmy White at snooker (sort of), *Whirlwind Snooker* became an overnight success, garnering lots of 90+ per cent scores in magazines. It's still considered to be one of the most realistic sports sims ever made.

POOL PARADISE



Year Released: 2004 **Featured Version:** PS2

GIVEN THE SUCCESS of his past snooker and pool titles, it was inevitable that Archer would eventually return to the genre. As well as being an accurate virtual version of the pub sport, *Pool Paradise* added a healthy portion of parody and a bizarre premise… Having been washed up on the shoreline of a tropical island, you soon happen upon a pool lover's version of a Sandals holiday resort where you take on all manner of bizarre-looking pool sharks in matches and various pool-based mini-games. The tranquil setting of *Pool Paradise* makes it a pleasant change from the usual glum and dingy surroundings of its peers, making it easy to get immersed in its gameplay.

ARCHER MACLEAN'S MERCURY



Year Released: 2005 **Featured Version:** PSP

IF YOU'RE GOING to attach your name to a product then it has to be good. As it stands, *Mercury* was very, very good and while the omission of its tilt control was sadly missing from the final release, it remains a wonderfully inventive PSP puzzler. Spread across seven large worlds (each comprising 12 levels), *Mercury* is an utter beast of a puzzler that gently coaxes you in before punishing you with some of the most devilishly designed tasks. Ignore the gaudy sequel that totally missed the point of Maclean's original and simply immerse yourself in *Mercury*'s beautiful blend of *Marble Madness* and *Super Monkey Ball* slickness combined with astonishingly realistic physics.

Binatone black and white consoles. Looking back, it was ingenious how it all worked from an electronics point of view. So this all sort of coincided with my own interest in electronics.

Then, around about '75 to '76, I started building microprocessor based computers myself, which was a long way from matchbox radios. They often ended up as great big boxy things the size of a television with hundreds of 300-400 logic chips in them. However it's all very well building something that clever only to find you can't actually do anything with it or buy any software whatsoever. Anyway, around the same time the USA magazine *Byte* was running articles on the Altair 8800 – the world's first home computer/homebrew kit, and Ambit International got one of these machines in for a closer look. As usual, there was nothing to run on it, but in 1976 we purchased an 8K BASIC interpreter program from a previously unknown company called Microsoft, and written by a certain Mr Bill Gates (and this was back when Microsoft had 15 people). This suddenly meant almost anyone with a Z80, 8080, or 6800 based computer could actually write something sensible, and make all this computer hardware do something more interesting than just flash a cursor on a B&W monitor.

And whilst I'm building computers, and learning BASIC work I'm also having fun down the arcades playing games, so the first thing that occurred to me was to try and replicate a *Pong* game on one of the Z80-based computers I had built. And I did just that. BASIC just wasn't fast enough to mimic an arcade game, but Machine Code / Assembly Language was 10,000 times faster so it should be able to. I soon learnt how to create assembly code, but had to write all my own tools to do it, including a compiler in BASIC! There were NO software tools of any description. So, one Sunday afternoon in 1977 I had reproduced on the screen what I had seen in the arcade the previous week. Of course, in 1978 there was just a huge explosion in arcade games due to *Space Invaders*, then within a year or so *Asteroids*, *Missile Command*, *Tempest* and loads of other iconic mega-famous arcade games were released, and whatever came out in the arcades I would just sit at home and try and re-create it.

RG: So who were your biggest influences when you first started to write games?

AM: Well *Dropzone* was obviously heavily influenced by *Stargate* and *Defender*. I actually met Eugene Jarvis for the first time recently and we chatted about similarities (he'd seen it on an emulator) and someone standing next to him said, "Yes, and it was better than *Defender*," but Eugene just laughed. Seriously though, I was heavily influenced by everything I saw in the arcades and studied visually exactly how *Robotron*, *Defender* and *Stargate* worked, and concluded that he must be a coding genius even in machine code to get so many bitmap lumps flying around. I promptly set about trying to replicate the look and the speed, in machine code, on my Atari 800, and you couldn't have written faster assembler code than I was producing. And then of course, years later I discovered it wasn't all down to efficient software, because the arcade electronics were in fact using an early form of hardware acceleration for graphics! And there was me trying to bust my back trying to make it happen at home, which is where my drive came from to make code run as fast as possible. And that really carried on right the way through to *Jimmy White's 3D Snooker* – who would have thought a snooker/pool game would do so well? It looked visually impressive for the time because there wasn't an awful lot of 3D games moving fast available.



» Archer meets videogame luminary Nolan Bushnell at the BAFTAs, Archer admits it was a fulfilling time.

> "One Saturday afternoon in 1977 I had reproduced on the screen what I had seen in the arcade the previous week"

RG: So do you think that it was the 3D look of *Jimmy White's Snooker* that really made it the huge success it was?

AM: Yup. And it was a damn good snooker simulation. *Jimmy White's* was originally called *147* up to the point of launch, and it was very fast (for the time), was great fun, and it had a lot of detail – all the usual stuff I try to put into a game. And the maths were about as pretty damn spot on as anyone had ever seen before. But it wasn't until right at the very last minute that Jimmy White got involved, and there is a story behind that. Me and a couple of guys from Virgin Games were exhibiting *147* at a London games show and of all the people in the world, Jeremy Beadle strolled right on up to the stand where *147* was being shown on big overhead TVs, and said, "You know, you guys need someone like Jimmy White endorsing that." And we were like "great, got his number?" He then produced the telephone number for a guy called Barry Hearn, who was a big sports promoter at the time, and within two days we all drove over to Romford and met this JR Ewing lookalike character. He was immediately very arrogant in his style, and he sat there leaning back in his chair, legs on the desk, occasionally giving his nuts a good scratch, and drinking a whisky. [Laughs.] We showed Barry this game and he really seemed to like it with his exact words being "Blimey, it plays like Jimmy White." And we said, "That's the man we want," and a few phone calls later we met up with Jimmy himself. I got on with Jimmy really well from he off, partly because I'd spent a lot of my time living in Essex and find myself dropping into an pseudo Essex/Cockney accent with ease, and we ended up getting quite drunk, having a curry and all the rest of it, and that was repeated for the next 15 years.



RG: So do you and Jimmy still keep in touch?

AM: Funny enough, he rang up the other day because one of his youngest kids has got a Wii and wanted to know whether we would consider releasing one of the older pool and snooker games for it. And, of course, we're in discussions. [Laughs.] But there's so many ideas out there I can't do all of them, but that would be a nice one to do. One final last go with Jimmy.

RG: So why snooker? Where did the idea come from?

AM: I'll tell you what it was. In the early Eighties I bought a video grabber that plugged into the side of my Atari, and the first thing I just happened to grab was a close-up of a snooker competition being broadcast on BBC2. And I'm looking at it thinking, "Hmmm, one day, one day," because this was way before 16-bit computers like the STs and Amigas and their much faster ability to do 16/32-bit division, multiplication and other functions necessary to do fast 3D. Poor old 6052s in the C64 and Atari 800s didn't have a snowball's chance in hell of doing it. Sure, there was a certain amount of 3D back in those days, but not anywhere near as fast as I needed to draw balls and do all the 3D maths and the calculations. So, many years later out comes the Atari ST and Amiga, and I bought another video grabber in 1987/8, and the first thing I thought of was this instance about six or seven years earlier where I gave great thought to how I was going to do the game, and off I went.

RG: So the idea had been developing away in your head for some time?

AM: Oh yeah, actually I remember in 1981, when I was at uni, I had a very vivid dream one night – quite often I get these weird dreamlike inspirations. It was at the time I was programming *Dropzone* on the Atari 800 and I was working through the night when I should have been doing course work. I was feeling fairly knackered and ended up having this really vivid dream of being a video camera on the end of a piece of string dangling over a snooker table with all the balls zipping around.

I think I know why that dream occurred, because at the time, people like Steve Davis and Ray Reardon were all over the BBC2 with *Pot Black* and the world snooker championships on for eight hours a day, and whilst I would be working away through the early hours I would also have a TV on the desk next to me, showing snooker, and it was going on and on, so I must have gone to bed at 6am with snooker images implanted in my head. So, yeah, this was all part of the synchronicity of what led up to coding a 3D snooker game and that's why the cameras that follow the balls zipping around above the table in *Jimmy White's 3D Snooker* are quite dramatic looking, for the time – it all came from that dream ten years before.

RG: That actually leads me quite nicely onto my next question. Where do you find the inspiration and ideas for your games?

AM: Well *Mercury* happened straight out of the huge *Cueball World* PC snooker game we did in 2000, where we had loads of fun sub-games including tilting maze levels, which were simple mazes with blocks and holes and ball bearings rolling around as you tilted them using a mouse. With mouse control you could guide one or more into various target holes just like those labyrinth mazes you get inside Christmas crackers. Anyway, around about the same time, I was also playing around with some electronics to build a proper analogue tilt sensor for a Game Boy Advance game idea, and I knew that most other tilt sensors were literally on/off using a ball of conductive mercury trapped in a tube with wires sticking into it. And it just hit me: what if we used liquid mercury blobs instead of ball bearings in the *Cueball* mazes?' Sure, I remember seeing mercury blobs in *Terminator 2* at the cinema; I never really made the link until now. But this is where the idea for *Mercury* came from, and I couldn't write the idea down quick enough. I hastily fleshed out a game design of 15-20 pages and the ideas for using colours, patterns, splitting blobs and the basic physical behaviour just wouldn't stop flowing. Funnily enough, whilst various publishers we showed it too back in 2000/2001 all loved it, no one would back it because it was "toooo radical", or "was just a puzzle game, it'll never sell' or it wasn't "organic enough" and a whole load of other stupid comments at the time. Funny how it became a PSP launch title that went first-party with Sony Japan…

RG: We heard that *Mercury* was originally intended to be released on other platforms, is that true?

AM: *Mercury* of course went out there as a launch title for the PSP, but yes there were other versions in parallel development on the PS2, GameCube and Xbox/PC. They all existed, and the PS2 version was just superb with this huge metallic blob of mercury glooping around your 50-inch plasma screen. But for daft reasons beyond my control, the PSP version was the only one that went out, but it still sold the better part of a million copies on just one platform, and that was onto a new machine with a low installed user base.

> "I ended up having this really vivid dream as being a video camera on the end of a piece of string dangling over a snooker table with all the balls zipping around"

RG: Are there any people or companies you would have loved to have had the opportunity to work with?

AM: By 1980 I desperately wanted to work for Atari in California – this big mythical company that I was such an evangelist for, but it never happened despite going for the interview. This was because in 1982 Atari imploded, having been one of Wall Street's fastest ever growing companies that didn't predict the downturn in the arcades in the early Eighties. But subsequently I went for interviews with Atari Europe and ended up being contracted to write a TV scoring program for ITV's *World Of Sport* because Atari were sponsoring the world canoeing championship in 1983/4/5. They needed someone to write a fast slick program with decent graphical display that would generate the overlaid scores on the TV screen, on demand of the director, and live, and I got to operate it three years running. I had to write all of that in about five weeks and it was three months' work in reality. And at the same time I was working on *Dropzone* in the background. However, more recently I finally got to meet Nolan Bushnell last week at the BAFTAs and it was a very fulfilling moment for me.

RG: So did you try and pitch *Dropzone* to Atari?

AM: Yup. I showed Atari UK the prototype of *Dropzone* in 1982 and they were blown away by its 50fps speed, smoothness and playability. Discussions were held to adapt it into



» Archer and his team of superheroes pose for the camera, isn't that Christian Bale in the background?

*NUMBER CRUNCHING

Dropzone was Archer's first published game, it was released in **1984**

Archer owns over a hundred different arcade games but only **15** pinball machines

International Karate reached number **1** in the American billboard charts for both the C64 and Atari 800

Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker was originally called **147**

£14.99: The price the Amiga version of the game sold for

IK+ allowed **2** players to compete in **3** man dust-ups with the computer

95%: the overall score *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker* was awarded in *Amiga Action*

Archer Maclean's Mercury features **7** worlds, with each world divided into **12** levels

Archer has now been creating games for over **25** years



» **[Wii] We got some playtime with Archer's new game, *SpeedZone*, when we visited him recently, and it's shaping up very nicely indeed.**

a proper-looking clone of *Defender* for the Atari 400/800 series. However, what finally came out as the licensed version of *Defender* was actually a really crap-looking version from an Apple home computer that did not make any use of all of the fancy Atari secret graphics hardware, and it ran at a very jerky 8-12fps. It was virtually unplayable. Apparently, there had been a big debate going on internally at Atari because they had already signed up the crap version and couldn't break the contract with them. So it all fell by the wayside, and I ended up having to take the contract for *Dropzone* to Geoff Brown who was running US Gold at the time. I knew him through a chance meeting at an early PCW show in '80/'81. He was running a big stand demoing all sorts of Atari games coming in from the States, when I sidled up to his stand and, unseen, slipped a *Dropzone* demo disk into a machine hooked up to the big TV high up on the stand facing the passing show attendees. Within a minute there were people stopped and staring at what they were seeing and the crowd grew into hundreds blocking the aisle. Geoff came out to see what had happened, and I walked up to admit it was all my fault. He was rubbing his hands with glee with dollar signs in his eyeballs, whilst I'm standing there going "wow, people actually like my stuff." So yeah I just wanted to finish *Dropzone* as soon as I could, but at the same time I also had to finish my degree, which, with hindsight, I've never used an ounce of. It's a degree in cybernetic electronic engineering, which involves maths, programming and building computers. I say I've never used an ounce of it because I was already doing a lot of it as a hobby before I ever went to university. But I stuck it out because I was under parental pressure to go and get a degree, then a good conventional job, and then a mortgage. I was fighting all the way, stating that "I want to be a games writer." My dad was supportive of my inquisitiveness, whereas my mum would try and push me academically. And yet, throughout all of this, in the background, I had this massive hobby going on from before I was even a teenager.



RG: So you eventually sold *Dropzone* to US Gold. You must have been delighted, especially when the reviews for the game started to roll in?

AM: *Dropzone* was the first game I ever sold for any sort of advance, and it was a finished game. All I had to do was tidy it up, make a master disk with some sort of elementary copy protection and within a week it was all done and dusted. I remember I hadn't earned any money since leaving university so to suddenly get a fat cheque was like "wow, I think I'll stick with this." I then went and blew most of it on some decent wheels. Then the game came out and it was this huge success with all the magazines saying incredibly nice things about it. I remember two months later standing in WH Smiths, without a penny left in the bank, reading the first review and it gave it a maximum score of ten out of ten, and I just thought "what have I created?" and was three feet off the floor with excitement. I just wanted to show everybody in the shop. With hindsight, I would have seemed like a right loon though. I did go on to get paid some royalties for the game, but as usual, after six months the royalties mysteriously dried up. But as is usual in the games industry, you get ripped off good and proper. And I soon learnt that where there's a hit there's a writ, as I had to issue proceedings for copyright infringement. I did so because US Gold hadn't wasted any time selling it all over the world and they were not entitled to do so. And that took a few years to resolve. But I did get to buy my first Ferrari from winning the case.

RG: You're obviously well known for collecting and restoring arcade machines, but you also have an impressive collection of digital

watches and calculators. Can you tell us about your collections and how they came about?

AM: Yeah, I reckon I have some kind of obsessive compulsive disorder fuelled by a lack of a decent early childhood. [Laughs.] Luckily I live in a cavernous house which is partly crammed, albeit in an orderly manner, with no end of things I've just hoarded over the years. Watches, calculators, computers, arcade cabs, pinball machines, gadgets everywhere. I even have all these electronics magazines I mentioned earlier, and even my old school books. I did have a fairly gruesome childhood for most of the time, not helped by a messy parental divorce, where I didn't have the things all the other kids at school had, and I was living a double life pretending I did. So I think something inside me just said "hoard it", whatever it was. And as for the arcade games, I'm basically paying homage to the machines that themselves inspired me enough to want to make a career out of writing games, despite my parents' best wishes.

RG: And what about the watches and calculators?

AM: For watches I think again from the early to mid-Seventies I was heavily influenced by seeing James Bond with a Pulsar P2 LED watch in the 1972 film *Live And Let Die* and thinking "I've got to get me one of those." And of course, in all the other cheesy James Bond films 007 had gadgets galore, and I wanted all those gadgets, and the cars, and the babes, etc. In later life I've hunted down those things and it's just gone completely mad. I think I was up to 750 watches at one point, some of which are stupid rare digital LED or early DSM LCD, or just plain unique, some solid gold and often good investments in these interesting economically screwed times.

The same with calculators, I remember being given a calculator in 1973 that my dad brought back from Hong Kong. It had a green fluorescent display, made by Sharp, and I've still got it, and it still works. At the time I had no idea such a thing existed and suddenly I was given one as a present. It was the nearest thing to magic I'd seen, but within two years everybody at school had one. So I then graduated into scientific calculators and by 1976 I bought the ultimate: a Texas Instruments SR-56, a programmable calculator, which with hindsight was used to do some of the earliest 'programming' I ever did including simple numerical games on the 12-digit LED display. All this was interlinked with building computers and writing assembly software. It occurred to me back then that I could program this calculator and store all sorts of stuff in it and go into an exam and cheat. [Laughs.] And the daft thing was I concentrated far more on the methods of cheating rather than actually using it. Anyway, I guess a lot of my OCD was a James Bond thing.

RG: So are there any obscure arcade machines that you hope to one day acquire for your collection, I understand *Domino Man* is a machine you've been after for a while?

AM: Yeah I've actually got a *Domino Man* now; it's funny you remember that. But *Domino Man* is weird in that the game itself is not particularly brilliant or anything – it just shows an isometric view of dominoes standing upright in a 3D landscape with a badly animated character walking all over the place. But the funky thing is the cabinet, because all over the front are large domino shapes with dimples and everything, it's just very unusual. I saw one once and just I thought "I've got to have one of those." It's incredibly rare because no one else ever really wanted one, and most were probably destroyed long ago. But I eventually found one on eBay.

There are a few games I have that I would like to get working. For example, I have an incredibly rare game called *Aztarac* which is a colour vector game with a unique display system using a vector-type display capable of drawing normal x/y vectored polygonal outlines, but then using an additional trick of filling in the vectored outlines in with a super-fast localised rasterising style vector fill, and no, its not a normal TV-type system. I know the board in mine works because I actually hooked it up to an X/Y oscilloscope and could see it come alive on the tube, but the monitor is completely blown to bits and there's no other compatible monitor in order to move the triple vector beams fast enough to generate the extremely unique imagery. It's an extremely rare monitor with only a few known to be in existence, so it's an ongoing project.

RG: So, can you tell us a bit about your new game, *SpeedZone*?

AM: Sure. It's an intensely fast and very addictive fantasy driving game set in some surreal space settings, linked to a progressive menu unlock structure, with a speed and detail unlike anything else ever seen to date on the Nintendo Wii. It takes Wii driving games to the next level for sure. Static pictures don't really do it justice because you have to see it moving flat out at 60fps and try it out to realise it's the mutt's nutts. It's got stacks of unusual features such as the ability to have up to eight players on one screen using four Wii Remotes and four Nunchuks or any other Nintendo HIDs. Even the musical composition throughout is really catchy, to the point where most of us have it on MP3 players. I've even got the game music in the car!

RG: So why have you chosen to release the game on the Wii?

AM: Well, the Wii game market is full of cutesy kid's games with lots of nice bright colours, mushrooms and flowery things etc. Nothing wrong with that but we felt there was a need to appeal to a wider age range and provide a really serious futuristic-looking game without losing the appeal of a game with quick pick-up-and-play feel to it. Focus testing has proved that our game hooks anyone from eight to 80, and we're very happy with that. *SpeedZone* is really pushing the Wii way more than any game we've ever seen on it to date. In fact, when we flew the game over to America recently, some of the distributors who looked at it said, "Is that an Xbox game, is that really running from a Wii?", or "Is that pre-rendered or what?" People are just blown away by it.

RG: So how did the idea for *SpeedZone* come about?

AM: Well, it's a very long story, but at one time we were thinking of doing a race game conversion for someone else onto the Wii, and for one reason or another we decided to go our own way and do our own game. I've always wanted to do a racing game but every time I try to present a race game design idea to a publisher, they've always said, "Don't do race, do space" or some such. This is the first time I have sat there and done my own thing from start to finish. And now we're getting a lot of interest in it.

RG: So what do you think of the current state of the industry?

AM: Financially it doesn't seem too bad, and better than many other sectors of the economy right now, but creatively it's as tough and irritating as ever trying to get publishers to buy into new ideas. Budgets for mega games have got so big now that no one likes to take a risk and all we see is version 6 of this, and sequel 10 of this etc. All publishers want 'the next best thing' or that 'killer game' but when you put something under their nose that is the next best thing, they don't want it as its seen as an unsaleable risk, and ask for something more conventional. And yes, I've been saying that for decades!

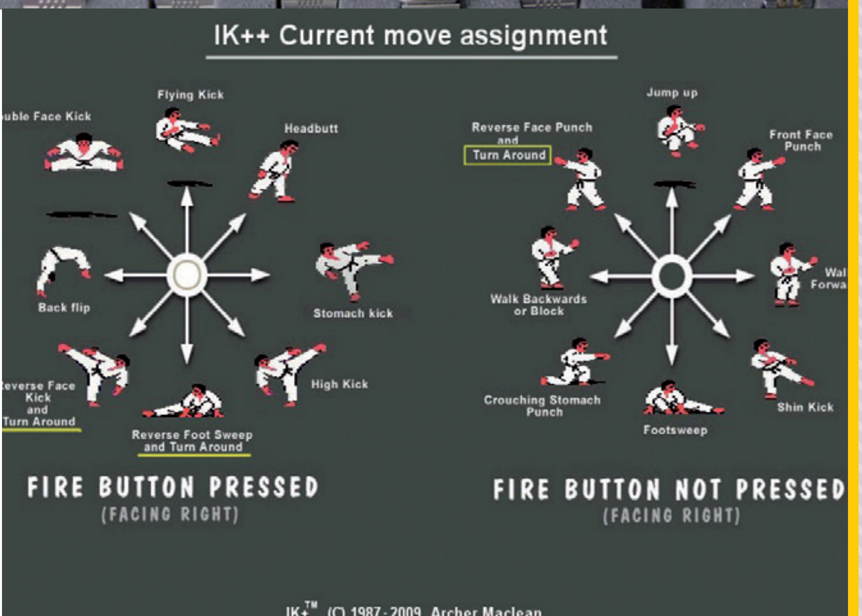
RG: Before you go, can you tell us something you've not told anyone else before?

AM: Yup. I once trained as a trapeze artist. And I have the pics to prove it.

> "It takes Wii driving games to the next level for sure. Static pictures don't really do it justice because you have to see it moving flat out at 60fps and try it out to realise it's the mutt's nutts"



» Archer has an impressive digital watch collection. Needless to say, he always has the correct time.



» [Atari ST] *IK++* does exist… here's a snap of the move list to prove it. The moves could be assigned by the player.



» Jimmy White here spotted hunting for pool sharks.

YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

After creating so many great games over the years it was inevitable that our readers would have their own probing questions for Archer. Here are just a few of them…

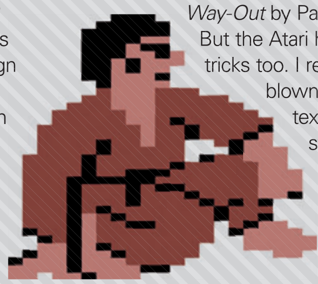
What has been your most favourite games machine to program for and why?
Well I suppose my first love would have been the Atari 800 because it had hidden talents that I didn't originally know about until I got hold of a secret internal Atari book from an Atari employee in 1980. It turned out to be a secret doctrine of what the machine's hardware was capable of, beyond anything the microprocessor could do. Initially I had no idea my Atari 800 had all these neat tricks inside it, and when I read the bible on it, I just sat their experimenting with what I could make it do. Basically, it was the earliest precursor to what we now have inside consoles.



If you could produce a game of any film or television programme, what would it be?
Maybe I would look at doing something going backwards in time, or set in microscopic worlds. But since I've got a few ideas along these lines, I don't want to give too much away. On a more basic level, I grew up watching *Tom & Jerry* cartoons, and back in the Eighties I really wanted to produce a beautifully animated interactive version of those cartoons, and yet build a free-roaming interactive storyline/mission around them.

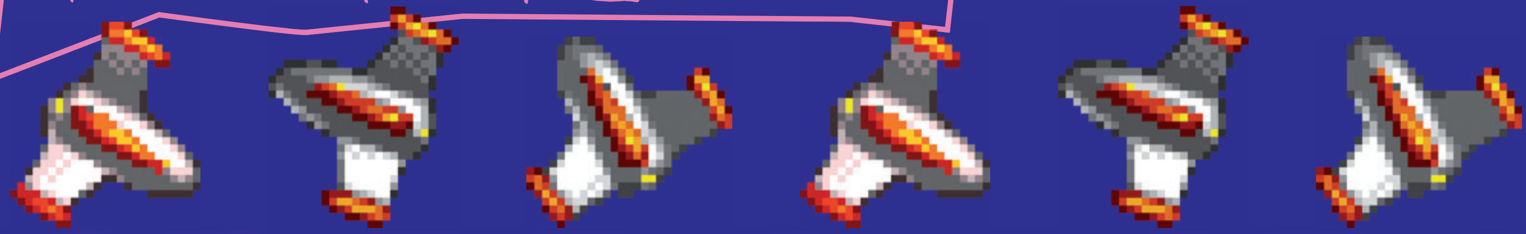
Which of your games would you most like to remake?
Funnily enough, there is a complete game design sat here for *Dropzone: Evolution* done over ten years ago, and it's got a novel twist on good old-fashioned game play mechanics but set on numerous small planets with graphical touches to make Spielberg proud, and underlying maths to freak out a PS3. But we haven't sorted out publisher funding yet, and it's going to need some heavy R&D on one aspect of its design.

Was it true you were developing an *International Karate Deluxe* (aka *IK++*) game for the ill-fated C64GS?
Not for the C64GS but I did do an unreleased *IK++* for the Atari ST and Amiga in about 1987/8. It basically allowed the user to collect fighting moves and define which ones would be in use for any given section of the game – which saw your fighter(s) exploring bigger scenes than *IK+* had. At the same time I didn't want to lose the very direct single control action of the joystick system that *IK+* had. So the user was allowed to visit a move-inventory and pick out their selection and assign them to where ever they wanted around a joystick, or concatenate some moves into a bigger sequence. But yeah, it did exist and somewhere I've actually got an ST version of it running, plus a grab of the move assignment screen.



Do you think the capabilities of the Atari 800 series were fully exploited by programmers?
Yes, but not many. For example, *Encounter* by Paul Woakes made excellent use of the graphics hardware, saving the processor loads of work. Same system was seen in *Way-Out* by Paul Edelstein in '82/3. But the Atari had some neat sound tricks too. I remember being blown away by the SAM text-to-speech sound synthesizer. This was better-sounding than most PC text-to-speech progs available now, 28 years later…

THE MAKING OF...



STARDUST

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** DAZE
- » **DEVELOPER:** BLOODHOUSE
- » **RELEASED:** 1993
- » **PLATFORM:** AMIGA, ATARI ST, PC
- » **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10+



Martyn Carroll quizzes creator Harri Tikkanen about the origins of the series that has gone on to spawn the glorious PS3 shooter Super Stardust HD

Retro Gamer: Can you start by telling us a bit about your early programming history?
Harri Tikkanen: I was in elementary school and one of my schoolmates got a Commodore VIC-20 from his parents. At first it wasn't clear to me what you could actually do with a computer but it felt unbelievably cool that you could have a real one in your home. When I visited him and he started up a game, I was sold. I asked my parents for a VIC-20 and later for a Commodore 64 but what I eventually got was a Salora Fellow, a computer that was only marketed in Finland. After the initial shock I was pretty happy with it and a few months later I created my first game, a really bad text adventure.

RG: When you moved on to the Amiga, what drew you to the demo scene?
HT: The main thing was that you met new people and you could actually create something worthwhile. You also learned a lot from others. And the parties were fun, although pretty hazardous at times.

RG: When and how was Bloodhouse formed? Did you always plan to one day release commercial games?
HT: *Stardust* was approximately 50 per cent finished when it occurred to us that we needed a company to help get the game published. We knew this business-like guy and he helped us set up the company and handle all the financials.

RG: Can you explain how Stardust came together? It appears that your aim was to create an old-school shooter with all the modern trimmings.
HT: I've always admired the beauty in the gameplay mechanics of *Asteroids*. The very first versions of *Stardust* were really simple, but I liked the concept and kept developing the game. In the early phases the development was pretty much along the lines of "I've got an idea, wouldn't it be cool if…", and then I programmed it in and tested it. If it worked I kept it, otherwise I got rid of it. The gameplay always came first and it was a real pain to make the game also look good. The tunnel sections were the other way around – first I came up with the effect and then I needed to fit the gameplay in.

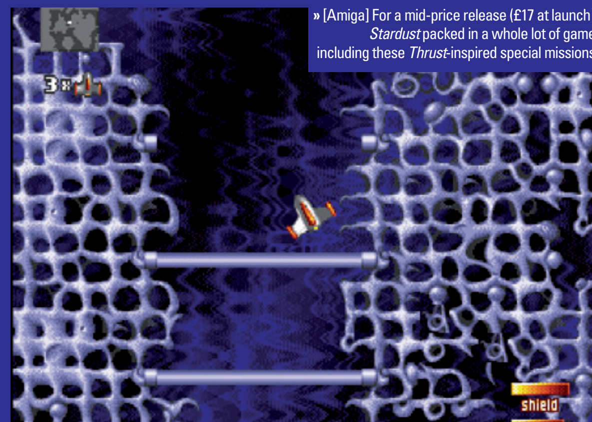
RG: Ah, everyone remembers the tunnel warp section! So how did you implement the 3D effect?



» **[Amiga]** Comin' at ya! The 3D tunnel segments were real 'wow' moments that static screenshots just can't convey.

Tunnel of love

Stardust's most amazing visual trick was the warp tunnel sequence that linked the different levels. Graftgold programmer Andrew Braybrook was so baffled by the 3D effect that he did some digging and revealed his findings in the August 1994 issue of Amiga magazine *The One*. He wrote: "What Bloodhouse has done is create a series of animation images which are two by two screens big, with only three frames or so in each. By cycling through the images, the impression of a moving tunnel is created, and because the animation screens are bigger than the Amiga's display, they are scrolled up, down, left and right to make you think that the perspective is changing." So it was basically a simple – but very effective – optical illusion. You can stop emailing Harri now.



» [Amiga] For a mid-price release (£17 at launch), *Stardust* packed in a whole lot of game, including these *Thrust*-inspired special missions.



» [Amiga] *Stardust*'s soundtrack could have been taken straight out of a scene release intro. Just another one of those rock-blocking beats…



» **[Amiga]** The ray-traced graphics were really well done, adding a pleasing visual sheen to the frantic shoot-'em-up action.

HT: It was actually a pretty simple trick. The funny thing is that I still get emails asking about the 'secret' of the effect. [See the 'Tunnel of love' boxout for more about the tunnel trick].

RG: The game was hard. Did you set out to create a game that would challenge even the best players?

HT: The first one was just too difficult. As it was our first game, we didn't understand that we had gotten very good at it during the development period. When we sent it out we were really surprised about the reports that it was too difficult. I played the game again a couple of years ago, and damn, it is super hard. We pretty much fixed this problem for Super Stardust.

RG: The back story involving an evil professor is plain crazy. Was this just an excuse to include a *Star Wars*-style opening sequence?

HT: I love *Star Wars*, even after [George] Lucas tried his best to ruin it for me. We actually tried to write a parody of a shoot-'em-up plot first, but it felt like any other plot from another shooter. So we had to up the ante and the idea of an evil penguin and his sinister agents disguised as meteorites was born. Most of the story was done by Petsku, *Stardust*'s graphics and design wizard.

RG: All the magazines awarded the game high scores. Did critical success translate into strong sales?

HT: *Stardust* performed pretty well but *Super Stardust* did better, even with a much smaller installed base of computers.

RG: Were there any planned elements to the original game that you had to scrap due to time or memory constraints?

HT: Plenty of things, as always. We were constantly running out of time, memory, processing power, and coffee. Luckily I had the opportunity to add some of these 'missing items' to *Super Stardust HD*.

RG: You've been given the opportunity to revisit and update the original formula, first with *Super Stardust* and now with *SSHD*. What are your main ambitions each time you approach the game?

HT: For *Super Stardust* it was about fixing the most glaring problems with the game, such as the difficulty level. For *SSHD* I was able to redesign the game totally, for my current tastes. Ultimately it has always been about making a game I would like to play myself.

RG: You're credited as being the designer, lead programmer and graphic artist on *Stardust*. Do you prefer working solo or are you happier as part of a team?

HT: Those were the days! For *SSHD* I'm just handling the design and production aspects – for programming and graphics we have far more talented people. I certainly prefer working with a great team and with a narrower area of responsibility. A game with the production values of *SSHD* would not be possible to create without a very capable team.

RG: So is creating games for PlayStation Network anything like the days of independent game development on the 8/16-bit machines?

HT: It's not the same, but it's probably closer than anything else. I hope that publishers will test the waters with even more downloadable games. The industry really needs to produce a wider variety of titles.

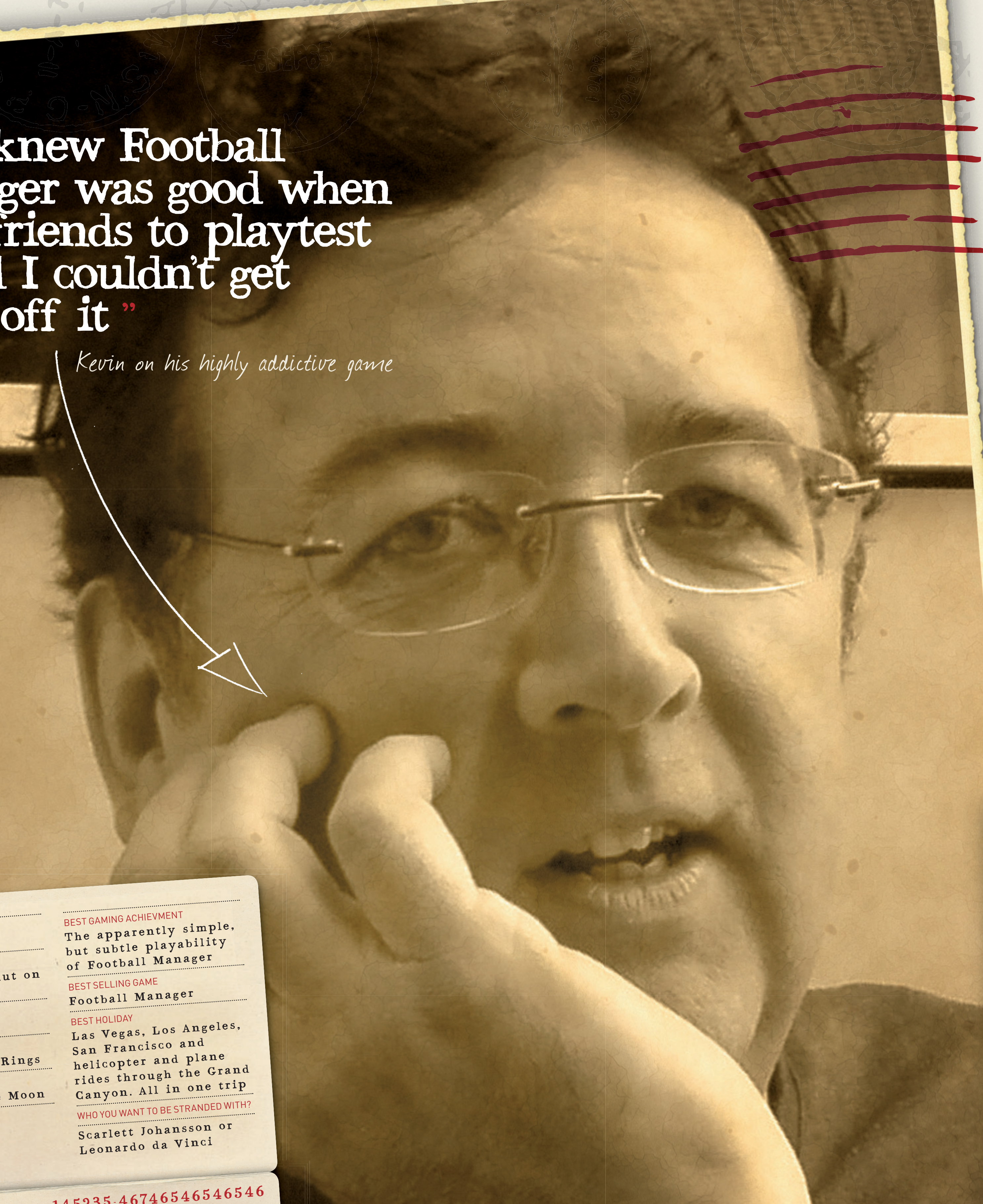
DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

SUPER STARDUST
SYSTEM: AMIGA (AGA ONLY), CD32, PC
YEAR: 1994/5

SUPER STARDUST HD (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: TRS-80
YEAR: 1981

SUPER STARDUST PORTABLE
SYSTEM: PLAYSTATION PORTABLE
YEAR: 2008





> “I knew Football Manager was good when I got friends to playtest it and I couldn't get them off it”

Kevin on his highly addictive game

FAMOUS FOR
Football Manager

FIRST JOB
Serving tea in a hut on Paignton beach

CURRENT JOB
Between jobs

FAVOURITE FILM
The Lord Of The Rings

FAVOURITE ALBUM
Dark Side Of The Moon

FIRST COMPUTER
Video Genie

BEST GAMING ACHIEVMENT
The apparently simple, but subtle playability of Football Manager

BEST SELLING GAME
Football Manager

BEST HOLIDAY
Las Vegas, Los Angeles, San Francisco and helicopter and plane rides through the Grand Canyon. All in one trip

WHO YOU WANT TO BE STRANDED WITH?
Scarlett Johansson or Leonardo da Vinci

145235-46746546546546



SEX
M

NAME
Kevin Toms

DATE OF BIRTH
26 OCT 1978

PLACE OF BIRTH
Devon

BIOGRAPHY
From humble beginnings as a server of tea on Paignton beach, Kevin Toms quickly rose to software prominence with the amazingly successful Football Manager. Several sequels followed before Toms moved to New Zealand where he still resides.

<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<

Kevin Toms...

What cherished games would you take to the island?

He turned the beautiful game into a beautiful game and became a software star. Kevin Toms tells **Paul Drury** all about Football Manager, being president of Addictive Games and that beard...

It's 1982 and a little chap with spindly legs has just put in a cross from out on the right. The big centre-forward slips between two defenders and crashes the ball home. Ah, if only Woodcock and Robson could have connected so fruitfully, England might have avoided their lacklustre exit from that year's World Cup. No, this bit of fluid football was happening on Spectrums across the land thanks to *Football Manager*, a game that seemed to come out of nowhere.

"It didn't come out of the blue at all," explains Kevin Toms, the gaffer behind the hugely successful series. "*Football Manager* had its roots back in board games that I'd created when I was a kid. It was a culmination of making those games and then bringing in my computer skills."

Football and games were a big part of Kevin's childhood. Growing up in Devon, he not only played footie, he formed his own team and took on managerial responsibilities at the tender age of 14, sketching out formations with stick-men at the back of class. His tactical approach resulted in him designing a board game based around the idea of guiding a club through league and cup competitions, buying and selling players and building up a squad. "I even went to see Waddingtons," recalls Kevin. "In the board game, you couldn't simulate the league very well. When the player wins a match they could move up the ladder but getting the results from other teams. You just had to fake it, which wasn't very satisfying. When I got my hands on microcomputers, I could solve that problem and emulate the other matches. I could see the potential straight away."

That first machine was a Video Genie, a clone of Tandy's TRS-80 Model 1, which arrived in the Toms camp in 1980. Kevin had been working as a programmer on IBM mainframes since leaving school and had coded his first game, a version of *Battleships*, on a programmable calculator the year before. He soon got to work bringing together his two passions. "It was all about getting the mechanisms right, creating that balance that makes *Football Manager* so playable. The strength of your players, building up your team over the season, trying to be successful… I guessed right away I didn't need an end to the game. Play on! That's a good thing. You create a history, whether you've battled to get out of the 4th Division or narrowly avoided relegation."

Kevin had not only fashioned a functioning league, he'd created a whole world based on the beautiful game, one where the player imbued each match statistic with an emotional depth. The screen might simply blink 1-0, but that was due to your canny transfer deals and managerial nous. "I knew it was good when I got friends to playtest it and I couldn't get them off it," says Kevin, proudly. "That's how I came up with the name of the company, Addictive Games."

Yes, as well as kicking-off the whole football management genre, Kevin was one of the plucky bedroom coders who were founding the British Software industry. With no real game retail or distribution network to speak of, he placed his first mail-order adverts in gaming magazines in January 1982, but made one important decision before launch: he converted the code to run on Sinclair's new machine, the ZX81.

"I ran the ad for the first four months of 1982. I counted I'd sold 300 for the ZX81 and three for the TRS-80! If I hadn't done the ZX version, I wouldn't even have been able to afford the advertising. I made a decision to drop it from the ads after that."

It was a sensible marketing move, the first of many by the coder who was now the boss of his own company. He handled all aspects of packaging and reproduction for the first *Football Manager* in-house… which happened to be a flat in Milton Keynes. "I had to do them one by one," recalls Kevin. "I'd set the recording going, watch the telly and when I heard the buzzing stop, I'd get up and put another one on. I remember talking to someone at a ZX Microfair and they said what if it doesn't work on their tape recorder? I said, Look, tell me what tape machine you've got, I'll buy one and do it on that for you. Problem solved!"

You just don't get that kind of service any more. Addictive certainly had the personal touch, with Kevin carefully

Trivia

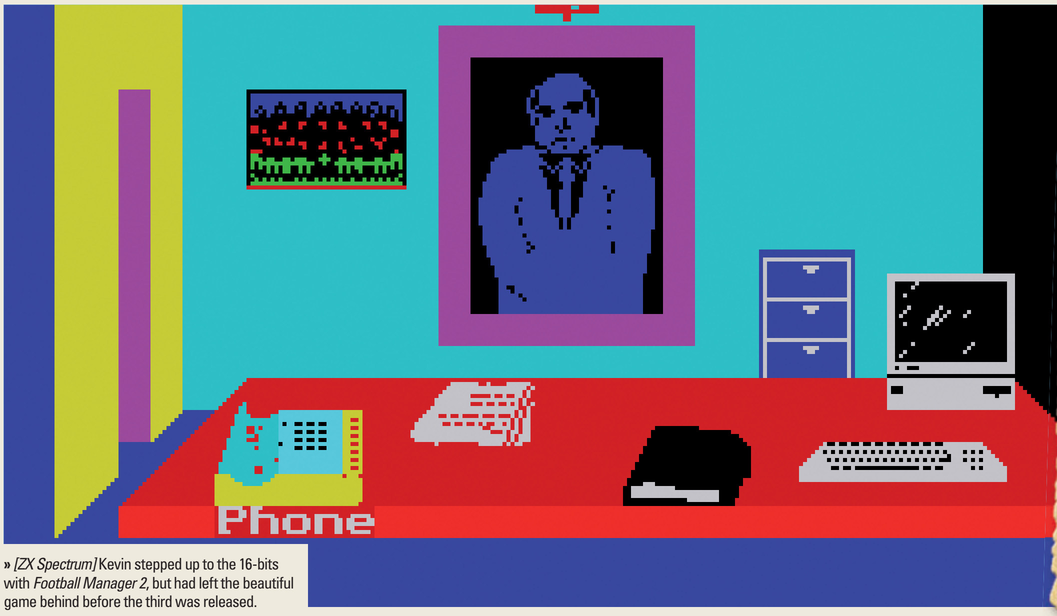
Kevin Toms was one of the most recognisable faces in the videogame industry during the Eighties. Virtually every game he was involved with sported a picture of his hairy chops, giving him a level of exposure that the likes of Matthew Smith could only dream of.



Those famous magazine adverts featured quotes from happy punters along with a picture of Kevin's face

DESERT ISLAND DISKS

Tom looks for inspiration for his latest footy project



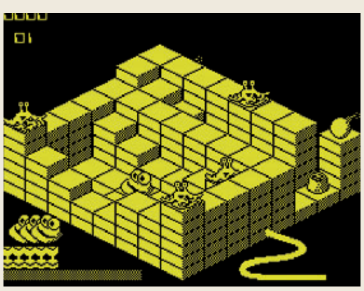
» [ZX Spectrum] Kevin stepped up to the 16-bits with *Football Manager 2*, but had left the beautiful game behind before the third was released.



The Others

It wasn't just Toms who was making games at Addictive...

"Once you have a successful software house, people send you games," explains Kevin. "With *Headcoach*, someone had seen *Football Manager* and it was their take on it for American Football." Whilst the backbone of Addictive Games' back-catalogue were titles written by Kevin himself, the company did publish the work of others, notably the impressive isometric block-shifting puzzler *Kirel*. "That was one that was sent in. A smart German guy called Siegfried Kurtz wrote it and I was impressed with what he'd done. I flew over to Germany to meet him and signed him up. It was exceptionally good and he was very bright. I remember one thing about him: he programmed in assembly but never actually used an assembler. He had it all in his head and entered it directly in hexadecimal. I had an email from him a couple of years ago. He went on to do a PhD in maths if I remember." Please note that Kevin had nothing to do with titles released after the sale of the company to Prism, so don't blame him for *Hotshot*.



extracting quotes from letters sent by happy punters and using them in future adverts for the game. Most memorably, he put his own bearded and beaming mug on the box and in the ads. "I realised it was like making a record or writing a book," he explains. "In the music industry, who really cares what the record label is? They care about the artiste. You buy a book because of the author, not who publishes it. Writing a game is creative work and people were interested in the person behind it. You have your own writing style. I was going to do more and wanted people to know it was me. I realised it was about credibility too. To put yourself up there, to put your face next to something, and if it was a pile of crap, you couldn't hide from that. Corporations have hidden away the creatives for fear of them being poached or starting to realise their value. This was my company, so no one was there to say he's getting too big for his boots, keep him in the backroom. And it seemed to work, people liked it."

So with Kevin's face launching the careers of thousands of aspiring Shanklys and Cloughs, *Football Manager* moved into the top flight with the ZX Spectrum version. Released in 1982, early in the machine's life, it was bolstered with many new features, most notably the match highlights which brought those stats to life. "I wasn't an artist, but what I did with those little stick men was pretty good I think," chuckles Kevin, who drew on his teenage classroom doodles to recreate the action on screen. "I got obsessed with Boolean logic. There are some carefully crafted things in those graphics. Not much speed but a lot of intelligence. Nothing is pre-programmed. There's no repetition and you couldn't be certain what was going to happen. Decisions are made by the players in real-time.

Trivia

The original *Football Manager* became such a massive success for Addictive that is was eventually ported to 14 different formats. Those ports appeared on everything from the BBC Micro to a snazzy-looking Amiga update.

Every moment in the attacks is linked to the strengths of the team, which is why results were realistic – but just like in real football, they could go the wrong way! You can lose 1-0 even if you played better."

Kevin thus dispels those playground myths that various secret keyboard combinations could guarantee a goal every time, yet the fact that those rumours were so prevalent illustrates the lofty position the game had in those early days of home computer gaming. And all this from a program written in BASIC, we note, prompting Kevin to put up a robust defence of the language that got most of us started.

"This obsession with machine code was kind of a macho thing," he states. "My game needed plenty of maths and logic. Writing it in assembler would have made things really hard for myself. Like now, if you can write something in Java or C++, you'd be crazy to write it in assembler. If you need to move sprites around really fast and smooth then that's different, but I wanted to experiment with the logic of the gameplay and to evolve that to get it right, and for that BASIC was a far superior tool. It was a high-level language and much more suitable for the job. Of course, it had disadvantages later. It was much easier to hack for a start."

Yes, 'bungs' arguably began back in '82, when grinning schoolboys broke into the *Football Manager* code and gave themselves budgets of Manchester City proportions. Still, this didn't appear to affect the huge sales of the game, which went on to grace a staggering 14 different formats. Kevin relocated Addictive to Bournemouth and was directly involved with all those conversions, though began employing others to adapt his code to fit the particulars of each machine.

Timeline

1982 | 1985 | 1987 | 1988

FOOTBALL MANAGER
■ **YEAR:** 1982
■ **VERSION:** ZX Spectrum
Astonishing first effort that kick-started a brand new genre and turned the bearded Toms into a household name.



SOFTWARE STAR
■ **YEAR:** 1985
■ **VERSION:** ZX Spectrum
Realising that he'd found his calling, Toms's next title was another strategy title, albeit one that focused solely on the videogame industry.



PRESIDENT
■ **YEAR:** 1987
■ **VERSION:** ZX Spectrum
Oh dear, another title that has its fans, but just doesn't ooze the same style and class as the wonderful *Football Manager*.



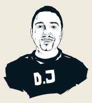
FOOTBALL MANAGER 2
■ **YEAR:** 1988
■ **VERSION:** ZX Spectrum
A massively improved footie manager that added plenty of new mechanics and saw Toms's bearded face rocket back up the charts.



The Team on Toms

Here's what the Retro Gamer staff think about Kevin's games…





My first introduction to Kevin Toms was on the Amstrad version of *Football Manager*, mainly because one of my Spectrum-owning friends wouldn't shut up about what a great game it was. I never managed to propel my team to victory (I couldn't manage my way out of a paper bag), but that didn't stop me from lapping up every sequel that came out.





The boy Toms married together two of my favourite things – footie and games – and created a whole world of cup runs, last minute winners and relegation battles with such limited resources. He kick-started a whole genre in the process and that bearded smile was such a fixture of those early magazines, I hope it makes a comeback one day…





Football Manager grabbed hold of a painfully large chunk of time from my youth, as I guided my local club to league success (and watched as great players maddeningly became rubbish whenever the new season started). Never has so much suspense been created by such simple match highlights. A wonderful little game that's still a joy to play through.

The company's success wasn't without its downside, though, as Kevin found himself consumed with the day-to-day demands of running a busy software house. It wasn't until 1985 that he managed to get back to creating a new game and it appeared to be a case of art imitating life. *Software Star* had its roots in a board game Kevin had designed in his youth based on the music business. Now living in an industry full of big money, marketing hype, teenage programming prodigies driving flash cars and the televised implosion of Imagine (no relation) fresh in his mind, it didn't take much of a leap to relocate the game closer to home.

"I could see the similarities with the music industry," says Kevin with a wry chuckle. "I wanted to do something else creatively and I'm still proud of *Software Star*. I suppose it's overshadowed by *Football Manager*, but then it hasn't got the advantage of an enormously popular sport as its subject matter."

The game mixes simple resource management – motivate your coders, get products to market, keep the board happy and balance the books – with lots of knowing swipes at the world of software development. You aren't allowed to advertise a title before it's released (no *MegaGame* vapourware here), you have little control over the actual content of the game, instead relying on 'creative' marketing and liberal use of hype, and there's much pun-spotting fun to be had when perusing the names of your competitors.

"Sigh-On, Perth Hut, Old Gen… I just found that entertaining," he smirks. "I was criticised for the 'hype' and 'honesty' policy. Hype could work and you'd do really, really well, better than honesty, but it was a risky strategy and it wouldn't always work. Someone contacted me and told me it was immoral to reward someone for being dishonest. Hype was something that was happening around me all the time. It was one of those times I felt like saying, 'It's just a game, not a serious moral comment!' "

Kevin similarly denies that his next title, *President*, was a damning critique of the Reagan years. Indeed, the premise of leading a nation constantly at war to protect its oil interests, whilst trying to balance the country's precarious finances and maintain popularity, suggests Obama might fancy a go.

"Looking back, I had too many things going on," acknowledges Kevin. "I had this oil exploration element and at the same time you were at war and people would come along with tanks and blow up your oil platforms. It was about balancing all these factors. I was under so much time pressure and I spent too much time on the animation, which took away effort from other aspects of the game. I remember

> "I was under so much pressure and spent too much time on the animation"
>
> *Kevin on the ambitious President*



Toms on Toms

From the crowd of Football Manager games, we asked Kevin to pick his favourite three versions



■ ZX SPECTRUM

Obvious, I know. Even playing it now on emulator it still has a nice feel to it. I guess it's my favourite piece of work. The way it came about, the work I put into it and the way I programmed it, too. I've got a lot of affection for it. It wasn't the first but it was the founding version.



■ AMSTRAD CPC 464

The way the graphics worked was good on this one. I liked the look. I found the Amstrad a good machine, a good tool to work with. Actually, I used the Amstrad to develop *Football Manager 2*. It was my main focus and I cross-compiled the other versions from it.



■ BBC MICRO

We couldn't use some of the graphic modes we normally did because they didn't leave enough memory for the game itself. We had to use Teletext mode, which meant each graphical cell was 2 x 3 pixels and with that I had to create a moving footballer… and I did!



If you want more information on Kevin then head to www.kevintoms.com

1990

2003

FOOTBALL MANAGER: WORLD CUP EDITION
■ YEAR: 1990
■ VERSION: ZX Spectrum
Toms's very last contribution to the franchise. It would be a further 13 years before he made another game.



NEW ZEALAND FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER
■ YEAR: 2003
■ VERSION: PC
You might not have heard of the teams, but this is another solid effort from Toms and one fans should check out.



FOOTYMAX
■ YEAR: 2006
■ VERSION: PC
FootyMax was an internet-based management effort that didn't take off. Sadly, this web page is all that remains.



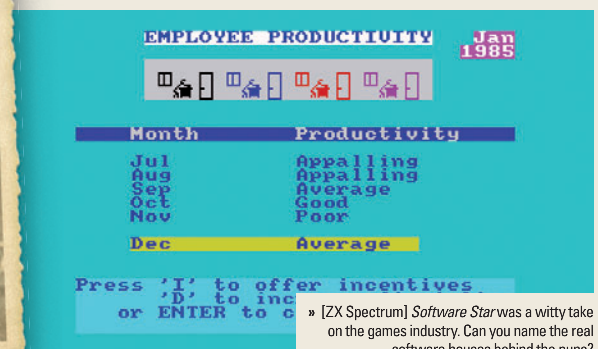
Desert Island Disks

Kevin having a kick-around with mates at Marble Arch. Judging by his expression, he's just been asked to go in goal…





» [ZX Spectrum] The Spectrum version of *Football Manager* saw Addictive join the Premier League of software houses.



» [ZX Spectrum] *Software Star* was a witty take on the games industry. Can you name the real software houses behind the puns?

Readers Questions

Mayhem: How much of playing *Software Star* was truly like living in the industry itself?
[Laughs.] A tongue-in-cheek version of it, yeah. There were elements, like the longer you spend on a game the better it's likely to be, but there's always a pressure to release because you need the income and I think that was realistic.

Woody Cool: Why did you decide to make *Football Manager* for some of the less popular machines?
It was a very fragmented market then, with far too many machines with far too small a market share. Over time, like with the C16, the demand would grow and then with the Amstrad, the BBC… there was kind of a momentum there. And then the Electron came out after the BBC and we'd already done most of the work, as it was very similar to the BBC but with less memory, which meant we couldn't get the graphics in! The Vic was like the C64 but very stripped down; a ridiculous number of 20 characters across the screen. Appalling. One version never got out, though – the Oric Atmos and Oric-1 were such unpredictable machines we could never get a reliable load so abandoned them.

Northway: Did pushing yourself to the front of the advertising work? What did other authors think about it?
I think it was misinterpreted. I know many authors have told me they didn't get any credit for their work… the publishers kept them in the background. It was something different, people joked about it and it wasn't sterile.

Bub&Bob: What football team do you support?
Though I've been away a long time my loyalties still lie with Torquay United from my childhood. I had the dubious honour of being at the match when they were relegated from the league.

Coopdevil: Why were West Brom the only league team missing from the Speccy version of *Football Manager*?
That's not true! There were 92 teams in the league when I wrote that and because of memory constraints, I could only do four leagues of 16 teams. So it was just chance as to which 16 I picked from each league. But I covered that by including a customising option so you could change the names of the teams!

The Hawk: Please could you say sorry to my wife for inventing a gaming genre that has put an enormous strain on our marriage over the years? Many thanks.
[Laughs.] Sorry, then. I've been told that many times before. And I know people who failed their exams because of playing *Football Manager*. I guess it shows the emotional grip the game had on people.

The Master: Please could you tell us who your favourite Doctor Who of all time is.
Well I really like David Tennant, there's just something about those staring eyes of his. On the other hand, I also like Tom Baker, again, it's something about the eyes.

I was three days away from the deadline I'd set and still had an enormous amount to do. I worked for 72 hours without sleep, finished the game at two in the morning and then drove from Bournemouth to deliver it to the manufacturer in Weston-super-Mare in my Porsche at high speed with the windows down to keep me awake."

The strain of running a company and trying to create new games was taking its toll on more than Kevin's road safety sense and thus he was hugely relieved, at least in the short term, when in 1987 one of his trading partners announced they were going public and were looking to acquire a software house. Selling Addictive to Prism allowed him to concentrate on writing games again, resulting in a long awaited sequel. *Football Manager 2*, released in 1988, added considerably more depth, particularly on the 16-bit machines, but when once he was in a league of his own, now Kevin had some formidable rivals in the shape of *The Double* and *Football Director*. Was it strange, having to compete in a genre he had created? "Yes, it was odd," he nods. "But there were always copycats and plenty of competition. The first *Football Manager* did so well, others saw there was money to be made. One of the things about it was its longevity – I remember seeing it still for sale for the Spectrum ten years after I'd written it!"

With the sequel, Kevin attempted to forge a stronger relationship with the action on screen and the stat-crunching going on in the background, though he notes that in hindsight he would have opted for a mouse rather than a joystick-driven user interface. He continued to work on the franchise with an expansion kit released the following year and a *World Cup Edition*, with Kevin writing the nucleus of the code in FORTH and then assembly programmers working on machine-specific elements such as graphics and audio. The arrangement worked well for a time, until Kevin found responsibility for managing this disparate band of coders

> "The way people talk about the beard, it's as if it's a separate entity, living its own life somewhere"
> *Kevin on his famous facial hair*

falling solely on his shoulders. "I was overloaded," he states. "It just became too much."

So began many years of travelling and numerous projects, from contract coding for Mirrorsoft to working for the European Space Agency. He eventually settled in New Zealand where in 2006 he returned to his first love and created *FootyMax*. "I wanted to do a *Football Manager* game on the internet and put a lot of effort into it, but the business partners didn't really take it far," he sighs. "I was disappointed but these things happen. I'm not finished with computer games, though. I'm looking at browser-based technology now and I've got lots of ideas. I know I've got more games in me."

And if we are lucky enough to get a new Kevin Toms title, please can we have that famous bearded face on the box for old times' sake? "Sadly the beard went a very long time ago," he laughs. "The early Nineties, I think. I was surprised to find I was still human underneath. The way people talk about the beard, it's as if it's still going! I may have shaved it off but it's like it walked out the building and is living its own life on an island somewhere. It's a separate entity. I should start a cartoon or something!"

Or maybe a videogame, Kevin…?

Kevin Toms'

Desert Island Disks

The games that Kevin just couldn't live without and why he loves them

01 Alpine Racer ARCADE

An arcade game I really enjoyed. I liked the 3D graphics going into the screen and the jumps. It was the one you actually stood on. Isn't that bad for my knees? [Laughs.] My knees are okay! Probably is bad for them, but it was a game I liked so much…

02 International Superstar Soccer 64 NINTENDO 64

I used to play this one with my son. Yes, I do like arcade football games, too. I'd probably be classed as a 'casual gamer'. I don't like long learning curves. I like the controls to be quite straightforward and not too complex with lots of key presses to get tricks. I find that frustrating. I haven't got the patience to learn these days and I found this very playable.

03 Mario Kart 64 NINTENDO 64

I used to play this with my children when they were growing up. Luigi was my favourite character. I've been reminded of it a lot recently because my partner has a seven-year-old son and he has a DS. He plays it a lot, too much she thinks, and as I walk round the house I hear the sounds of *Mario Kart*.

04 Space Invaders ARCADE

I was working in Northampton and every lunchtime, me and two mates would go to the pub for a beer and a pie. They had a *Space Invaders* machine and we were playing it for weeks trying to get past the first screen! We'd get stuck on that last invader! We were all desperate to know what happened next. Of course, it was something of an anticlimax…

05 Pac-Man ARCADE

Just really, really playable. Did I ever attempt a *Pac-Man* clone? No, I never did that sort of thing. If you look back at our history, you'll see why. Because I was so involved in the business side of things, my problem was lack of time, not interest. I hadn't got time to play around with things that didn't need to be done.

06 Sega Rally ARCADE

Loved both the first and second one and played them a lot with my friends in the arcade. I played *Daytona* a lot too, which was similar, but that was just round the loop, so I'll go for this as my choice.

07 Super Mario 64 NINTENDO 64

Again from playing it with my children – there was a period when we played a lot of games together and this was one of them. An exploring game and I found it so rich and colourful and pleasant. We got really good it at and it was great fun playing it with them.

08 Buck Rogers And The Planet Of Zoom ARCADE

An arcade game with a corny name, I know. I especially like it because of it being 3D going into the screen. I loved that. Things coming out at you. That element of flying into the screen is something I like in games and this is one I really enjoyed.

01



02



03



04



05



06

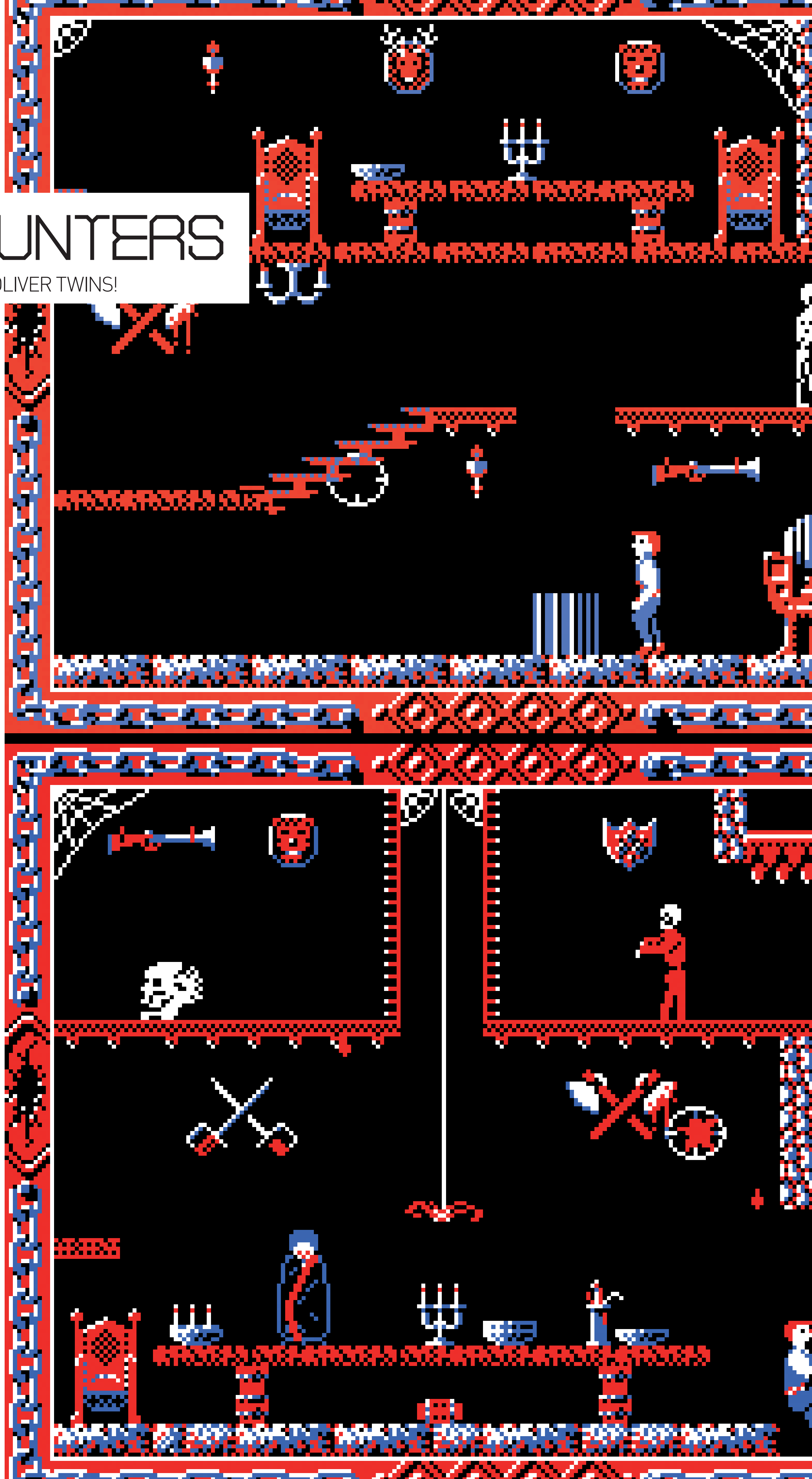


07



08



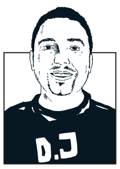


GHOST HUNTERS

WHO YOU GONNA CALL? THE OLIVER TWINS!



- **PUBLISHER:** CODEMASTERS
- **RELEASED:** 1987
- **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** AMSTRAD CPC
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1+



HISTORY

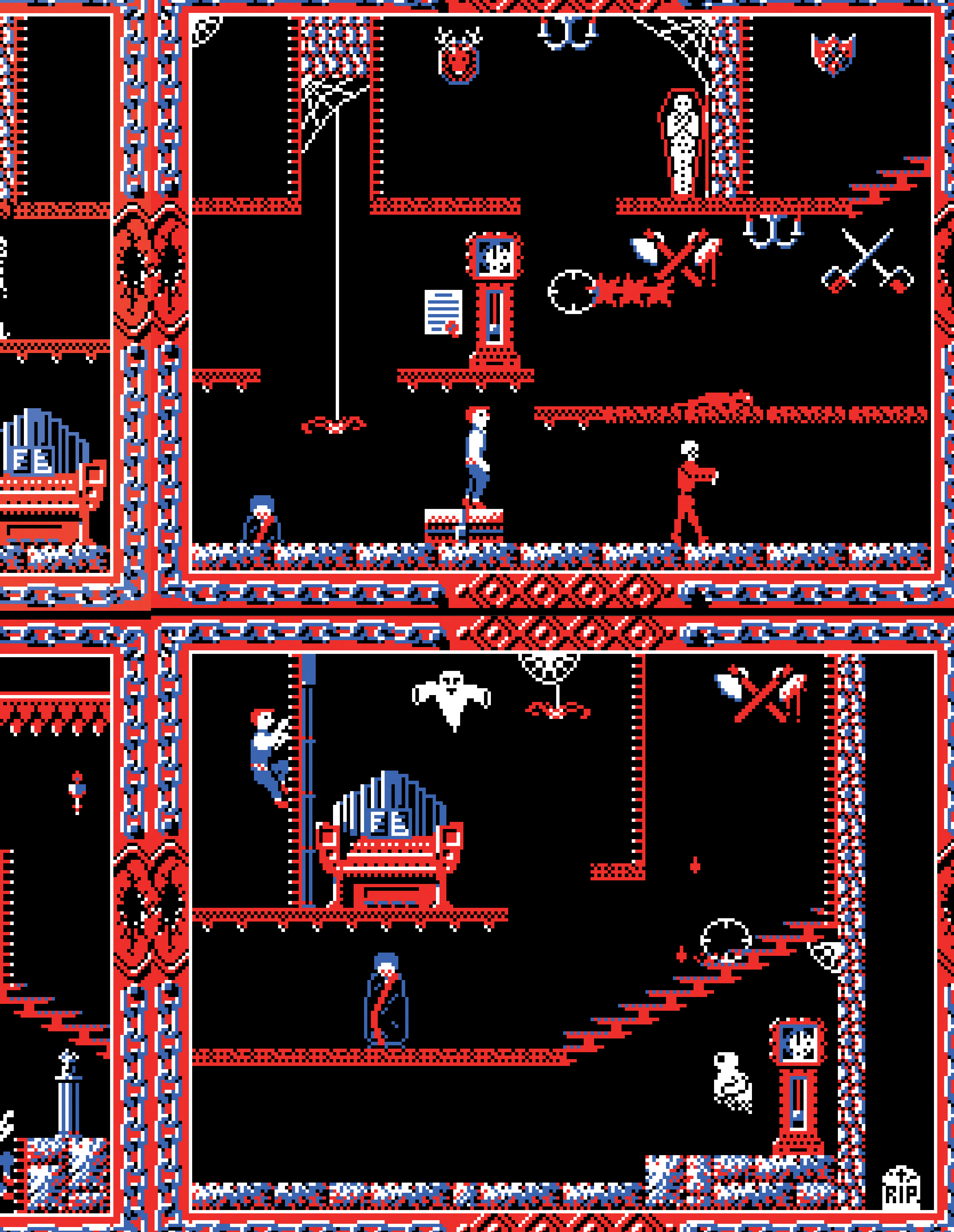
***Ghost Hunters* was the very first game I ever purchased for my Amstrad CPC 464 and would start a lifelong obsession with Codemasters' budget releases that I still continue to collect – albeit with far less frequency than I once did – to this day. It was also the very first game to teach me that you should never, ever take anything at face value.**

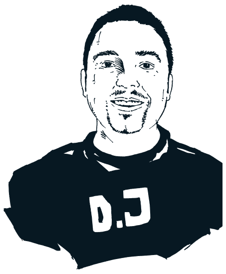
An early Oliver Twins game from 1987 BD (Before *Dizzy*), *Ghost Hunters* placed you in the sinewy form of Hunk Studbuckle – no really – a muscle-bound Rambo lookalike who was trying to rescue his brother from the evil clutches of Professor Twilight.

As you entered each of *Ghost Hunter*'s 21 screens, a selection of ghouls and ghosties would appear, instantly causing your Terrometer to rise, which in turn caused your Macho Energy to decrease (aren't Eighties games amazing?). Fortunately you could easily gun down anything that appeared on screen with your trusty Phantom Splatterer; unfortunately, Chuck was completely immobile when doing so.

Needless to say, *Ghost Hunters* became a clunky, creaky mess that saw you slowly hobbling around the decently designed screens because of your constant need to stop and gun down the rapidly appearing enemies. This was not what I had paid my £1.99 for. Or so I had thought…

Ready to head back to the shops, I decided to have one final game with a friend. That final game turned into another, and another, and another. It was only then that the true genius of *Ghost Hunters* became apparent. Rare for its time, the two-player mode allowed one player to move Hunk around the mansion, while the other could simply concentrate on gunning down the persistent nasties that continually appeared. It made a huge difference to the gameplay (although Hunk still moved around with a treacly gait), taught me that all aspects of a game should be examined before dismissing it and revealed that Philip and Andrew Oliver were two brothers to definitely keep an eye on.


RIP



» PAL gamers unite! Chrono Trigger, one of the greatest SNES RPGs of all time, is now available in the UK for the very first time. It's still a brilliant piece of work as well. Check out the full lowdown here, along with reviews of RE5, Sonic and more.

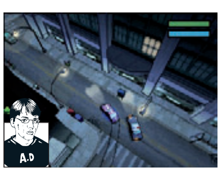
✱ PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars
I'm not really a huge fan of *GTA*, but this is astonishing stuff.



STUART
The King of Fighters Collection: The Orochi Saga
The PSP port is disappointing, but the Wii effort is superb.



ASH
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars
Forget the 3D psuedo-dramas. GTA is about being fun again.

» RESIDENT EVIL 5

PS3



» [PS3] These moments were scary as hell in *Resident Evil 4*. Now they're just an annoyance.

✱ GO DEEPER
The facts behind Resident Evil 5

» **If you're not too clued up on *Resident Evil's* timeline then allow us to inform you that part 5 takes place roughly a decade after the original game.**

» **Early previews mentioned that elements like heat stroke would affect the main character, but Capcom later dismissed this as a mistranslation.**

» **In Japan the *Resident Evil* franchise is known as *Biohazard*. Shinji Mikami revealed in Retro Gamer that he dislikes its Western title.**

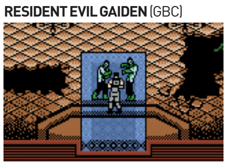
Resident Evil 5

RESI RETURNS, ONLY CAPCOM FORGOT TO MAKE IT SCARY

INFORMATION
- **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PS3
- **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** XBOX 360
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PRICE:** £49.99
- **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM
- **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2

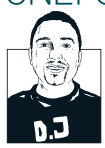
BRIEF HISTORY
» *Resident Evil* (a re-imagining of Capcom's Sweet Home) was first released for Sony's PlayStation in 1996 and has spawned numerous sequels and movies over the past 13 years. This fifth outing continues on from part 4 but also throws a new co-op mode into the equation.

✱ WHY NOT TRY
▼ SOMETHING OLD
RESIDENT EVIL GAIDEN (GBC)



▽ SOMETHING NEW
RESIDENT EVIL 4 WII EDITION (Wii)





Poor old Capcom. It reinvents both *Resident Evil* and the survival horror franchise with the excellent *Resident Evil 4* and then Electronic Arts and *Dead Space* come along and spoil all the fun.

Resident Evil 5 may boast stunning graphics, dynamic cut-scenes and the sort of action set-pieces that wouldn't look out of place in *Metal Gear Solid 4*, but it's also hamstrung by the same clunky controls that have plagued the series since gamers first stepped into Capcom's ominous mansion. Granted you'll no doubt read glowing reviews arguing that the poor controls are purposely there to create fear and tension while you're playing, but *Dead Space* proves that you can make a perfectly acceptable survival horror game without having to rely on out-of-date controls.

Fortunately, aside from the aforementioned controls, Capcom's latest instalment of its survival horror franchise is pretty enjoyable stuff, even if the actual survival horror isn't really anywhere to be seen any more. Indeed, part five shares more in common with Epic's *Gears Of War* that Mikami's original vision, mainly due to the addition of your partner Sheva – who starts off as about as much use as a chocolate ashtray, but slowly turns into a genuine asset as your adventure continues – and the new online/offline partnership that her inclusion brings to the table.

Co-op mode aside – which is actually incredible when playing with a friend – the most ironic aspect of *Resident Evil* 5 is that just four years after Capcom's tremendous makeover, it now feels old hat and, dare we say it, not very scary at all. Sure there are occasional tense moments, and the boss encounters are handled with typical Capcom aplomb, but like the T-Virus, the franchise has fully morphed into a completely different beast to what it once was. And if we're brutally honest, we preferred the old model. It's still really good; it's just not really *Resident Evil* any more.

OPINION



Resident Evil 5 is a bit of an odd one for retro fans. Though the story comes full circle, wrapping up all the threads that date back to the 1996 original, the gameplay is as modern as ever and feels far removed from its survival horror origins. The unlockable Mercenaries mode is good old fashioned score attack fun though. **Ashley Day**

In a nutshell
It's definitely moved away from its survival-horror roots and the clunky controls now feel tired and archaic, but this is still worth experiencing, especially with a friend in tow.

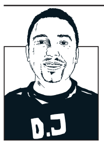
» Scores

Presentation	**90%**
Graphics	**96%**
Sound	**80%**
Playability	**80%**
Addictivity	**82%**
Overall	**85%**

Sonic And The Dark Knight

SONIC GETS HIS SWORD OUT

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** Wii » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** NA » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £34.99 » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA » **DEVELOPER:** SONIC TEAM » **PLAYERS:** 1-2



We'll admit to writing off *Sonic And The Black Knight* as soon as we spied the hedgehog's ridiculously oversized sword. The joke's on us though, as this is easily the best 3D Sonic game we've played since *The Secret Rings*. It's also miles better than the recent *Sonic Unleashed*.

The reason *Black Knight* works so well is because Sonic and the rest of his friends have been transported to a world where wielding a sword is perfectly natural, meaning that it doesn't feel like Sega is shoehorning a new gimmick into the franchise simply for the sake of it.

Then there's the fact that most levels consist of simple missions, ranging from defeating a specific boss to taking out a set number of enemies. With many of the missions lasting for only around the five-minute mark, it ensures that the gameplay always remains fresh and exciting, and in this respect *Sonic And The Black Knight* begins to feel more like a score-attack game.

It's also stunning to look at, with some truly beautiful level design, great cut-scenes and exceptional animation, making it one of the best-looking Wii efforts since the excellent *Super Mario Galaxy*. It certainly has its flaws – few of the levels match the lengthy brilliance of *Unleashed*'s day stages, and it can sometimes be tricky to time your sword attacks – but this is nevertheless a fun fresh take on Sega's most iconic franchise. Give it a try; you may be pleasantly surprised. We certainly were.

» Scores

Presentation	86%
Graphics	91%
Sound	78%
Playability	74%
Addictivity	71%
Overall	**76%**



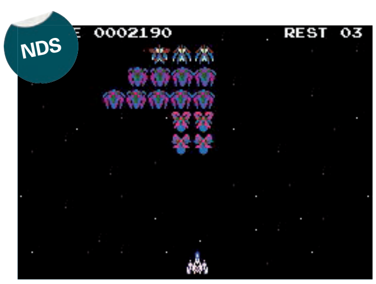
» [Wii] Any game that allows you beat the hell of of Shadow is always going to score highly with us.



OPINION



A lot of reviews have harshly criticised *Black Knight* but I think it's a great *Sonic* game. The idea of using a sword *sounds* wrong but works great in practice, turning what is usually an un-engaging rollercoaster into a semi-skilled experience again..
Ashley Day



Retro Game Challenge

» **SYSTEM:** NDS
» **PRICE:** £20+ » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **Now here's a** clever idea. This is a collection of mini-games based on eight fictional Famicom titles, ranging from shooters to platformers. Brilliantly polished – the fake games have everything from illustrated cartridges to instruction manuals – it boasts solid challenges and a brilliant sense of humour. Only available on import.

» Score **81%**

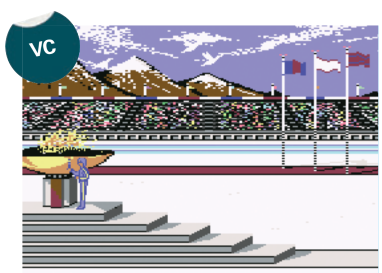


Trivial Pursuit

» **SYSTEM:** XBOX 360
» **PRICE:** £39.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-4

» **After the hash** that was *Monopoly Here And Now*, EA has actually delivered an entertaining take on another popular board game. Certain elements have been dumbed down – you now get to choose from multiple answers – but the brilliant presentation and huge range of questions definitely make up for it. In fact, the only real mistake is not including an online mode. Surprising fun.

» Score **70%**



Winter Games

» **SYSTEM:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE
» **PRICE:** 500 POINTS » **PLAYERS:** 1-8

» **We're in two** minds about *Winter Games*. While it boasts the same excellent presentation of past Epyx titles that have appeared on the VC, there are only five decent events on offer here. Luckily, they all play extremely well – Biathlon and Bobsleigh being our favourites. The visuals still hold up well, while none of the events relies on simply button-mashing your way to success.

» Score **71%**



Exit 2

» **SYSTEM:** LIVE ARCADE
» **PRICE:** 800 POINTS » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **Mr ESC is** once again on Live Arcade and doing what he does best: rescuing people. Unfortunately though, that's pretty much all you get in this half-baked sequel. Yes, there are a huge number of levels to make your way through and everything looks as stylish as ever, but they lack the ingenuity of *Exit*'s puzzles. The price point is fairly good, but this is more an update than a true sequel.

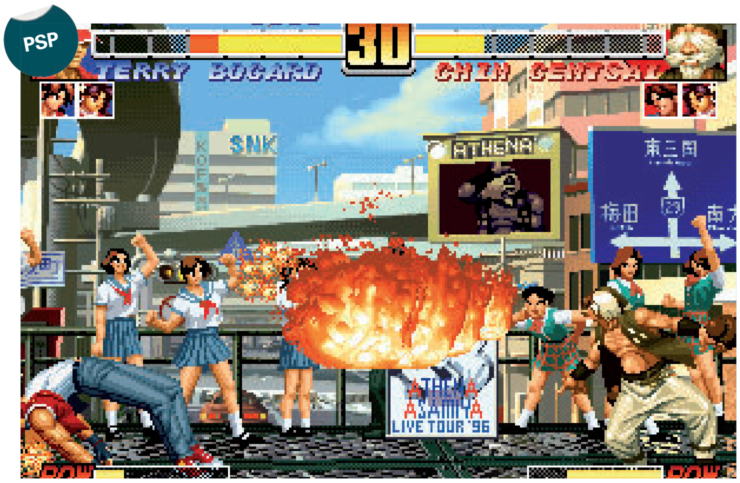
» Score **68%**

The King of Fighters Collection: The Orochi Saga

GREAT GAMES, POOR COMPILATION

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PSP » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PS2, WII » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £19.99 » **PUBLISHER:** IGNITION » **DEVELOPER:** SNK PLAYMORE » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

PSP



» [PSP] *KOF '96* features some excellent gameplay and easily gives *Street Fighter II* a run for its money.



***The Orochi Saga* is our favourite part of *The King Of Fighters* canon, so it's upsetting to reveal that this rushed PSP port doesn't do the series justice. Indeed, if you do want to get your hands on this compilation of the first five games from *The King Of Fighters* franchise then we'd strongly advise you to get the Wii version instead, as the coding is far better than it is here.**

We've no problems with the visual side of *The Orochi Saga*, but the insanely lengthy pauses – actually between rounds – and botched sound effects, which are either absent from matches or completely wrong, do let this down somewhat; especially when the available Virtual Console offerings are so solid.

It's a real pity as there's still plenty to enjoy with this collection. After all, SNK's long-running *King Of Fighters* franchise features some great games, with *'96* and *'98* being particularly exceptional and easily matching the brilliance of Capcom's early fighters. Specials are occasionally difficult to pull off, but that's really down to the PSP's infamous D-pad/thumbstick as opposed to any coding issues on SNK's part.

The price point for this collection is decent, there's plenty of variety between the five included games, and there's even a new challenge mode that allows you to unlock plenty of artwork and game music by completing specific tasks. If *The Orochi Saga* had been given a little more love it could have been excellent; as it is, it's just passable.

OPINION



I know PSP games can take a while to load, but the times in *The Orochi Saga* just take the proverbial. Yes it's a cheaply priced package, but it's been cheaply put together as well. The games certainly play well enough, but it's just not enough. Stick with the excellent Wii version instead.

Stuart Hunt

» Scores

Presentation	30%
Graphics	90%
Sound	40%
Playability	85%
Addictivity	65%

Overall 54%

PSN



» [PSN] *Söldner-X*'s visuals certainly look the part, but the actual gameplay is severely lacking.

Söldner-X Himmelsstürmer

AVERAGENESS, THY NAME IS SÖLDNER-X

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PSN » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PC » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £7.99 » **PUBLISHER:** EASTASIA SOFT » **DEVELOPER:** SIDEQUEST STUDIOS » **PLAYERS:** 1-2



SideQuest Studios clearly wants to mimic the success that the Japanese have had with the shoot-'em-up genre, but the German development studio just has no idea how to do so.

Instead what you have here is indicative of those naff European shooters that were so popular back in the days of the Amiga, which is a real pity as SideQuest has at least come up with some genuinely decent ideas.

Switching between different weapons to power them up is a nice touch, but it's immediately redundant due to nothing coming close to the power of your main weapon. Then there's the fact that *Söldner-X* feels that a good difficulty is created by just simply filling the screen with unpredictable enemies instead of adding any decent level design.

Visually it's okay with solid, vivid explosions, reasonably imaginative



enemies and some huge bosses, but SideQuest's insistence on simply filling up the screens with huge amounts of foes means that you're often just looking at a sickening and confusing kaleidoscope that makes it's incredibly hard to work out what to do.

We're pleased that shoot-'em-ups are still getting made, and it's always nice to see a new one appear on the PS3, but the sheer monotony that is *Söldner-X* is enough to put off the most hardcore shmup fan.

OPINION



I actually quite enjoyed this, probably because it reminds me of Team 17's *Project X* (a shooter Darran apparently despises). It certainly looks nice enough, but the predictable level design, bland weapons and expensive price mean I'd probably never buy it. Sorry.

Stuart Hunt

» Scores

Presentation	55%
Graphics	80%
Sound	85%
Playability	50%
Addictivity	45%

Overall 52%

Wonder Boy In Monster Land

SEGA'S WONDROUS SEQUEL HITS THE VC

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** SMS » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW » **PRICE:** 500 POINTS » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA » **DEVELOPER:** WESTONE » **PLAYERS:** 1



The *Wonder Boy* franchise had a great run on Sega's Master System, and while the second outing isn't quite up to the majesty of *Dragon's Trap*, it remains a wonderful platformer/adventure.

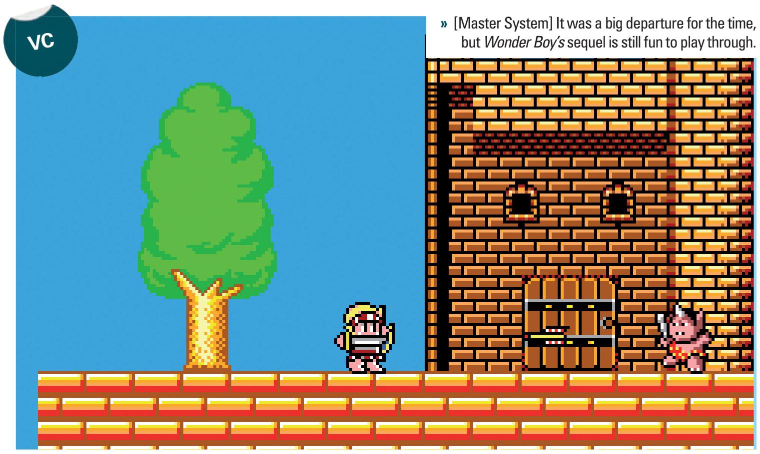
It's also aged incredibly well, with the detailed sprites and jaunty tunes really helping to enhance the simple but fun gameplay. Leaving his skateboard and hammer at home this time, Tom Tom traverses a whole range of varied *Monster Land* locations ranging from deep caves to tropical islands. Money can be won from vanquished foes, which can in turn be used to buy a variety of weapons and armour upgrades – handy as *Monster Land* gets tough very, very quickly.

Graphically, *Monster Land* still manages to impress thanks to its cute monsters, solid (if unspectacular) animation and detailed locations. Everything is bright and cheerful and is further enhanced by some ridiculously jolly tunes that perfectly complement the colourful and imaginative visuals. Bosses are rather uninspiring, and surprisingly tiny, but many of them put up a decent fight, meaning that it's going to take a fair amount of time before you're able to successfully complete all 12 levels.

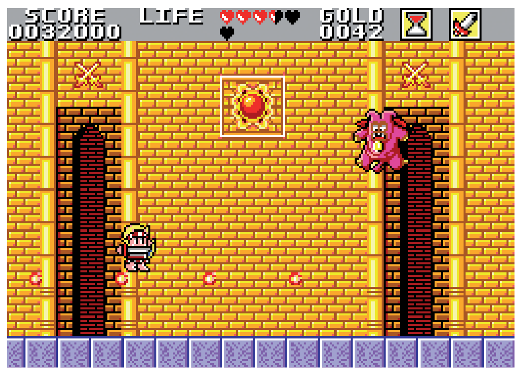
Sega is ever so slowly drip-feeding its Master System titles onto the VC, so when gems like *Monster Land* come along we eagerly snap them up. There are certainly better examples available on Nintendo's download service, most notably a PC Engine version of *Dragon's Trap*, but this is still worth the paltry asking price.

» Scores

Presentation	65%
Graphics	75%
Sound	78%
Playability	83%
Addictivity	85%
Overall	**72%**



» [Master System] It was a big departure for the time, but *Wonder Boy's* sequel is still fun to play through.



OPINION



I purchased this with my first ever pay packet (a long time ago now) and it's still as good as ever. It's obviously been eclipsed by the far superior *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap*, but if you're a fan of the series then it's well worth revisiting. **Darran Jones**

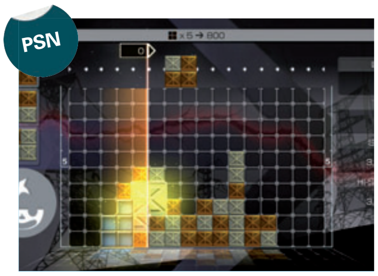


GTI Club +

» **SYSTEM:** PSN
» **PRICE:** £9.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-8

» **Sumo certainly likes** its racers. After breathing life into Sega's *Out Run* franchise, it's now done the same with a hallowed Konami licence and the results are breathtaking. *GTI Club+* looks stunning with its new high-definition sheen and gives us high hopes for *Out Run Live Arcade*. What a pity then that it's let down by some poor online issues and a general lack of gameplay modes.

» Score **80%**

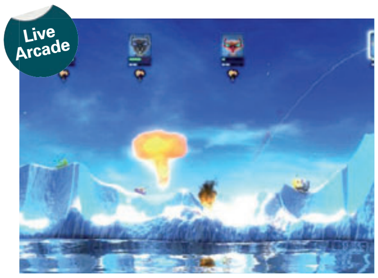


Lumines Supernova

» **SYSTEM:** PSN
» **PRICE:** £8.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

» **The lack of** online play and standout skins is rather annoying, but *Supernova* remains insanely addictive stuff. Not making the same mistake it had on Live Arcade, Q Entertainment adds a huge amount of gameplay modes and gives you plenty to unlock (and some devilish trophies to obtain). An excellent little puzzle game at a sensible price.

» Score **82%**



Death Tank

» **SYSTEM:** LIVE ARCADE
» **PRICE:** 1,200 POINTS » **PLAYERS:** 1-8

» **We've been rabidly** looking forward to *Death Tank*'s Xbox Live debut, but we're crushingly disappointed by this expensive remake. The multiplayer remains excellent fun, but we hate the stupidly high price point. It's almost as if the developers are taking the Michael because they know how popular the Saturn originals were. Add an extra 25% if you're always going to play it with a full complement of friends.

» Score **64%**



Clay Fighter

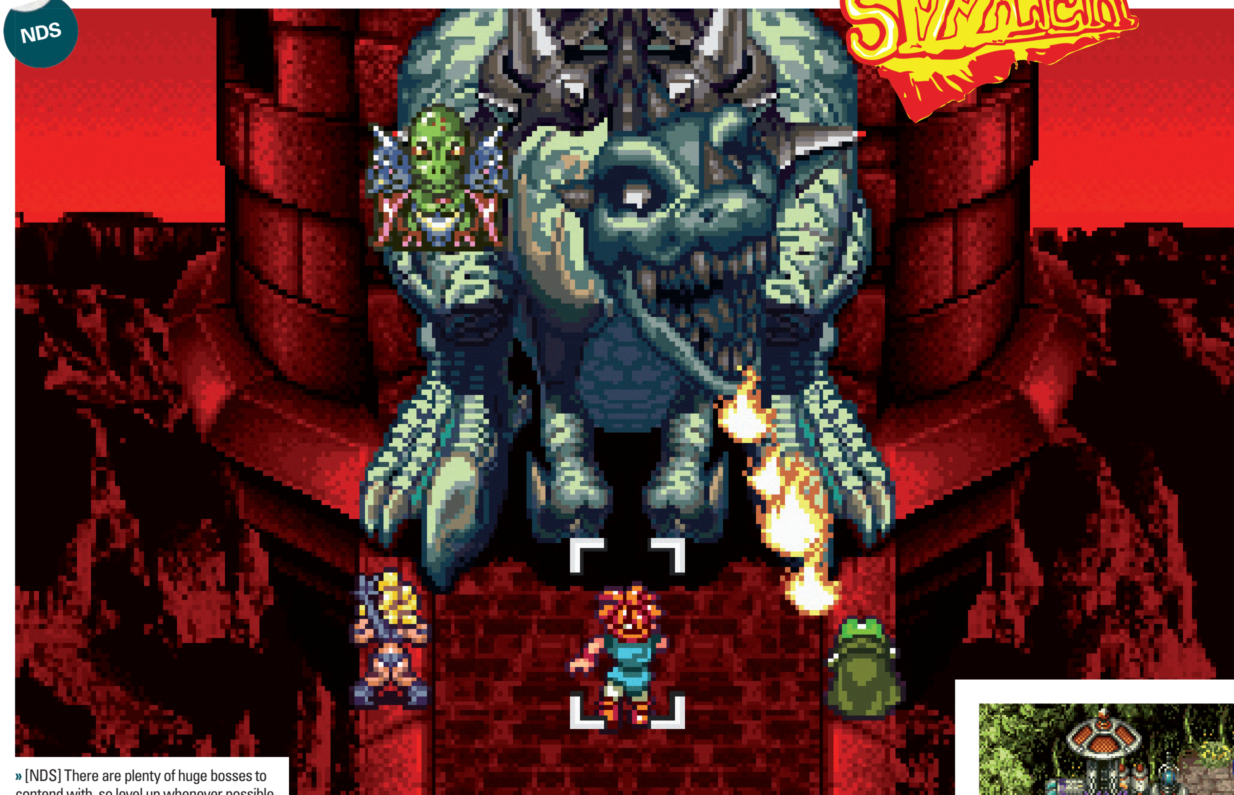
» **SYSTEM:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE
» **PRICE:** 800 POINTS » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

» **This insipid brawler** wasn't anything special upon its original release back in 1994, so it's amazing to see that it's managed to be green-lit for the Virtual Console. After all, who on earth is going to buy it? Yes it certainly looks pretty, but the ropy animation, dull special moves and clunky gameplay means that only a masochistic beat-'em-up fan is going to get any pleasure out of this turkey.

» Score **28%**

» CHRONO TRIGGER

NDS



» [NDS] There are plenty of huge bosses to contend with, so level up whenever possible.

★ GO DEEPER

The facts behind Chrono Trigger

» ***Chrono Trigger*** **was composer Yasunori Mitsuda's first solo project. He worked so hard on the music, he had to stop due to a stomach ulcer.**

» **Three add-ons were released for the SNES's Satellaview: *Chrono Trigger: Jet Bike Special*, plus *Character* and *Music Library*.**

★ WHY NOT TRY

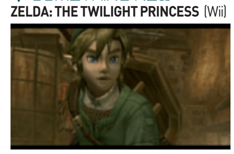
▼ SOMETHING OLD

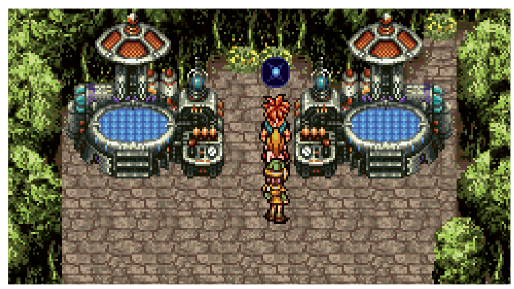
ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST (SNES)



▽ SOMETHING NEW

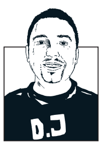
ZELDA: THE TWILIGHT PRINCESS (Wii)





SQUARE'S TIME-TRAVELLING ODYSSEY HITS THE DS IN STYLE

Chrono Trigger



Previously, if you'd wanted to get your hands on Square's classic SNES adventure you'd have needed to shell out up to £100 for a complete version. Not any more though. Square Enix has blown the dust off its superb adventure, added an exclusive new dungeon, thrown in a few additions to please the DS crowd and in doing so has hopefully ensured that *Chrono Trigger* will now be enjoyed by a brand new generation of gamers. Oh and let's not forget that this is the first time in 14 years that the prestigious title has been officially available to PAL gamers.

The most pleasing aspect of this new update is that Square hasn't given it the same 3D makeover as for *Final Fantasy III* and *IV*. *Chrono Trigger*'s level and sprite design is so timeless, so perfect, that the beautifully animated characters still look fantastic today. Full of character, brilliantly detailed and lacking the annoying slowdown that plagued the PlayStation release, *Chrono Trigger* is an exceptional looking game that makes us wish more developers would stick with 2D. Audio is impressive too, with Yasunori Mitsuda and Nobuo Uematsu's scintillating soundtrack offering the emotional range and depth that similar games can only dream of.

Worry not, though, for while Square has only included two new dungeons, it's done as much as it can to ensure that those new to *Chrono Trigger* find the experience as painless as possible. Along with a classic mode that mimics the game's original setup, there's a new DS mode that moves everything to the lower screen and also allows you to control hero Cronos via the stylus (although the D-pad works equally well). Then there's the fact that Square has ported all the PlayStation's bonus features, with the animated cut-scenes looking particularly nice on the DS's screen.

Nothing else has been tampered with, so you still get the excellent combat system, a truly exceptionally crafted story and a selection of memorable and endearing characters. *Chrono Trigger* was considered to be a masterclass in RPG game design when it was first released, and the same applies now. If you've never experienced this amazing adventure, then this is the perfect time to do so.

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** NDS
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £29.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** SQUARE ENIX
- » **DEVELOPER:** SQUARE ENIX
- » **PLAYERS:** 1

BRIEF HISTORY

» First released in 1995, *Chrono Trigger* was a collaboration between many of Square's most talented coders and instantly broke many traditional Japanese RPG conventions. It was ported to the PlayStation in 1999 by TOSE and was succeeded by a sequel, *Chrono Cross*, in the same year.

OPINION



I spent a lot of money on the original US SNES version of *Chrono Trigger*, so it's impressive to see that Square Enix have managed to re-release a game and not make it feel like a cheap rip-off. It's also still one of the greatest 2D rpgs of all time, despite the fact it's now 14 years old.

Stuart Hunt

In a nutshell

***Chrono Trigger* is rightly regarded as one of the greatest Japanese RPGs of all time, so it's pleasing to see that so much care and attention has been lavished upon this DS update.**

» Scores

Presentation	90%
Graphics	95%
Sound	98%
Playability	98%
Addictivity	96%

Overall 95%

» GRAND THEFT AUTO: CHINATOWN WARS

INFORMATION

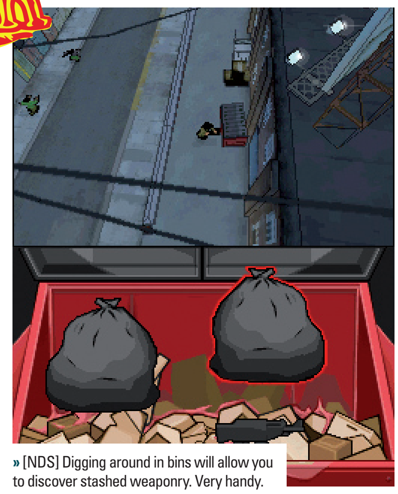
- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** NDS
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £29.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** ROCKSTAR
- » **DEVELOPER:** ROCKSTAR LEEDS
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

BRIEF HISTORY

» The brainchild of DMA Design's David Jones, *Grand Theft Auto* has gone on to become one of gaming's most successful franchises. Constantly drawing controversy, the last addition to the franchise, *Grand Theft Auto IV* sold over 3.5 million units on its first day of release.



» [NDS] Locking onto enemies is easy as you simply hold down the right shoulder button.

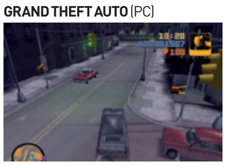


» [NDS] Digging around in bins will allow you to discover stashed weaponry. Very handy.

✱ WHY NOT TRY

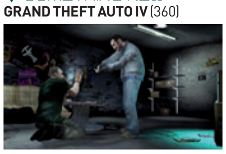
▼ SOMETHING OLD

GRAND THEFT AUTO (PC)



▽ SOMETHING NEW

GRAND THEFT AUTO IV (360)



✱ GO DEEPER

The facts behind Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars

» *Chinatown Wars* is the fourth *GTA* game to be released on a Nintendo handheld. The last was *Grand Theft Auto Advance* on the Game Boy Advance.

» Samuel L Jackson, James Woods, Danny Dyer, Michael Madsen and Burt Reynolds have all lent their voices to past games.

THE KEYS TO LIBERTY CITY ARE NOW IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND

Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars



Past handheld iterations of *GTA* have always ended in disappointment, with *Grand Theft Auto Advance* being a particularly bitter pill to swallow. Worry not though, for *Chinatown Wars* is not only the best portable *GTA* to date, but also manages to give part *IV* a damned good run for its money as well.

Yes there are things we don't like – the trading of proper drugs like heroin and ecstasy seems like a deliberate move by Rockstar to cause controversy for the sake of it – but they're outweighed by the sheer amount of joy you can have from recklessly rampaging through Liberty City.

Jacking cars, gunning down rivals, dealing drugs, delivering noodles… no job is too big or small for protagonist Huang Lee. And while there's nothing here that you've not seen in past games, it's the inventive uses of the DS's controls that make your stay in Liberty City so special.

One minute you're frantically tapping on the touch-screen to break out of a submerged car, the next you're using your stylus to assemble a high-powered sniper rifle or flinging Molotov cocktails with a deft movement of your thumb. The ingenious uses for the touch-screen keep on coming and are only surpassed by the expertly crafted missions and sharp, if incredibly foul, dialogue that's thrown at you. Multiplayer is also well catered for, with you being able to do everything from taking part in street races to holding off hordes of gangs with a mate, while you can instantly check a host of different stats by visiting Rockstar's Social Club.

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of *Chinatown Wars*, however, is just how well everything has been tailored to work on the DS's two screens. Visuals throughout are brilliant, with impressive textures, detailed cars and swish effects like headlights, rain and lighting. Meanwhile the DS's bottom screen allows you to easily access your PDA, email, GPS, radio stations and anything else that takes your fancy.

Add in additional gameplay elements like being able to root through trash in order to find stashed guns, making Molotov cocktails with a few manipulations of your stylus and even whistling out for nearby cabs, and *Chinatown Wars* manages to deliver a level of immersion that few other DS games can match.



» [NDS] *Chinatown Wars*' visuals are amazingly polished and feature plenty of impressive lighting and weather effects.

OPINION



I've never really liked the modern GTA games so I approached this latest entry with some caution but was pleasantly surprised with what I found. It doesn't take itself too seriously, the gameplay is bit-sized and accessible and its makes brilliant use of the DS's features.

Ashley Day

In a nutshell

***Chinatown Wars* effortlessly captures the spirit of DMA Design's original *GTA* games, whilst bringing the action bang up to date for modern gamers. An excellent little game that makes terrific use of the DS.**

» Scores

Presentation	94%
Graphics	90%
Sound	88%
Playability	90%
Addictivity	94%
Overall	**93%**

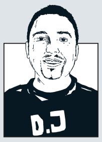
MOBILERETRO

» MOBILE ROUND-UP

iDracula: Undead Awakening

ROBOTRON WITH ZOMBIES. WHAT'S NOT TO LOVE?

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **PRICE:** £1.79 » **GET IT FROM:** ITUNES



If you're one of those cynics who feel that the iPhone is incapable of replicating old games, then you really need to play *iDracula*, as it should instantly dispel any (unfounded) fears you have.

iDracula is effectively *Robotron: 2084* with zombies and it works incredibly well. Each lower corner of the iPhone's screen contains a dial, which is used to control both movement and firing. It's obviously not as tactile as playing with two proper twin-sticks, but it's a testament to MoreGames Entertainment that it has managed to replicate the arcade controls so well.

Another impressive aspect of *iDracula* is just how much has now been crammed into it (the original version was fun, but was a pretty bare-bones release). Survival and Super Survival are just that and see you taking on a increasing number of enemies, Rush simply overwhelms you with an insane amount of foes, while Wave Attack sees you picking up gold from fallen monsters that can then be used to purchase new weaponry before the next round starts. There's even the ability to pick up extra bonuses (called perks) that do anything from increasing your health to enhancing your weapons. It's all impeccably polished and bolstered by some astonishing visuals and incredibly funky audio. If you love shooters, *iDracula* is an essential purchase. Download it right now.

» Scores

Presentation	85%
Graphics	96%
Sound	92%
Playability	96%
Addictivity	97%
Overall	**94%**

retro GAMER SIZZLER



» The flamethrower is one of eight weapons you can use to fight the undead hordes.



iPhone

OPINION



Darran was always going to adore a *Robotron* game, but rest assured *iDracula* is very good stuff. The gothic styling works really well, while the enemy waves are absolutely relentless. If you're a fan of blasters you're going to adore this.

Stuart Hunt

Euro Fighter

» **SYSTEM:** MOBILE (J2ME FORMAT) » **PRICE:** £3+
» **GET IT FROM:** WWW.HEROCRAFT.COM/EN/



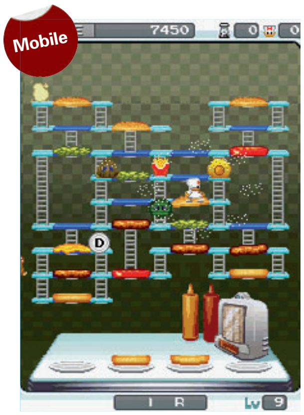
Mobile

» Whilst we love our shmups, we tend to give mobile variants a wide berth. Most of them get hamstrung by clunky controls that can make it all too difficult to avoid incoming bullets, while the small screen can also be an issue. Fortunately, *Euro Fighter* manages to bypass these issues and does a lot of things right. Enemy waves are well thought out, there's a pleasing number of power-ups to collect, while bullets can be easily made out. The lack of music and weedy effects annoy, but this is otherwise fun (if generic) stuff.

» Score **66%**

BurgerTime Delight

» **SYSTEM:** MOBILE (J2ME FORMAT) » **PRICE:** £2+
» **GET IT FROM:** WWW.NAMCOGAMES.COM



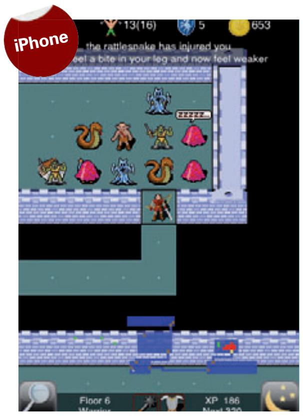
Mobile

» We used to love playing *BurgerTime* back in the arcades of old and this new effort from Namco Bandai is just as fun as the 1982 original. All you do is run around the cleverly designed levels avoiding enemies and making burgers. It's a ridiculously simple concept but works exceptionally well, thanks to some extremely tight controls, bright new colourful visuals and jaunty tunes. There are no real new additions to the 27-year-old gameplay, but if you're looking for simple arcade-style fun you could do a lot worse. Another solid effort from Namco.

» Score **85%**

Rogue Touch

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **PRICE:** £1.79
» **GET IT FROM:** ITUNES



iPhone

» Now this is maddeningly addictive stuff. Basically an update of Epyx's own take on the original 1980 hit, it's so addictive it should come with a government health warning. Despite the simple gameplay, visuals and plot – you're required to retrieve an amulet on the 26th level of a dungeon – *Rogue Touch*'s slick interface, massive variety of weapons and vicious monsters will ensure that you won't rest until you finish it – even if you have to die a hundred times in the process. The best *Rogue* game we've recently played, on any system.

» Score **89%**

PuzzleQuest

» **SYSTEM:** ITOUCH » **PRICE:** £4.99
» **GET IT FROM:** ITUNES

iPhone



» **While *PuzzleQuest* remains** an excellent little game, this port is let down by a few little niggles that stop us from recommending it over the DS equivalent. Text is very hard to read – even after its recent update – while the small icons can be a real pain to accurately hit, which is especially annoying on later levels. There's also a distinct blurriness to the visuals that looks strange on the iPhone's razor-sharp screen. Basically it feels like a rushed port that doesn't take advantage of the format it's on. It's still good fun, just not as good as it should have been.

» Score **65%**

iPhone



Metal Gear Solid Touch

» **SYSTEM:** iPHONE » **PRICE:** £3.49
» **GET IT FROM:** iTUNES

» **Those expecting a** proper *Metal Gear Solid* game will no doubt be mightily annoyed by Kojima's latest effort. Worry not though, for while it feels a little light on extras it's nevertheless a fun if rather bland shooter. What makes *MGS Touch* stand apart from other similar games on the iPhone is the need to aim your reticule instead of simply tapping enemies as they appear. It's a nice touch and is further complemented by a great sniper weapon (you pinch the screen to zoom in and out). Sadly, there's little variety in the missions, so it gets tired pretty quickly.

» Score **71%**

Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.

» **SYSTEM:** MOBILE (FORMAT J2ME) » **PRICE:** £3+
» **GET IT FROM:** WWW.GAMELOFT.CO.UK

Mobile



» **It may be** based on a brand new franchise, but this 2D shooter is retro through and through. Sadly though, it's not the greatest example of the genre we've recently played, and while it looks great, it's marred by some clunky controls that can make dodging bullets a real nightmare. Then there are the annoying slowdown sections where you have to follow a preset path, which is a lot harder than it sounds and breaks up the fun if repetitive action. It's certainly a valiant effort, but it just feels like our mobile couldn't cope with GameLoft's ambition.

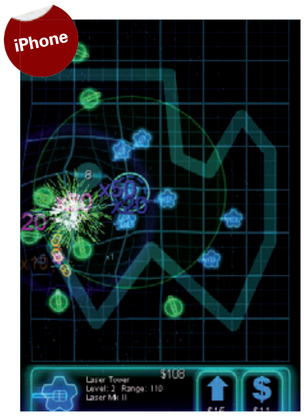
» Score **57%**

geoDefence

retro GAMER SIZZLER

» **SYSTEM:** iPHONE » **PRICE:** 59 PENCE
» **GET IT FROM:** iTUNES

iPhone



» **If you're a** fan of the *Fieldrunners* tower defence game, you need to own *geoDefence* as it's even better. Styled to look like *Geometry Wars* and available for an amazingly low price, it's incredibly stylish, features a great range of towers and has a ridiculous number of levels to plough through. Unlike *Fieldrunners* there are set paths for you to set your towers by, meaning that even more strategy is needed to take down the ever-growing waves of enemies. The difficulty level is a bit steep for the genre, but that's our only concern. Super stuff.

» Score **90%**

CHATTER BOX

» After being wowed by last month's excellent Vector Tanks, we were able to catch up with creator **Peter Hirchsberg** and discovered just how much effort went into the awesome app...



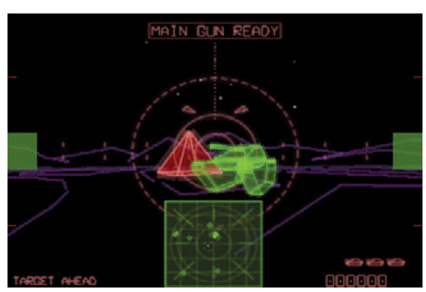
Why did you make *Vector Tanks*?
I definitely wanted to do some sort of 'vector graphics' retro game as my first major iPhone game. I then started picturing a game that utilised the control mechanism of one thumb on either side of the screen, as sliders. Of course, tank type games immediately came to mind as being best suited for that type of controls.

What's been the most difficult aspect when programming it?
Definitely performance. The OpenGL implementation on the iPhone does not seem to use hardware acceleration for drawing line primitives (oddly). There were some messy calculations to make sure the lines look correct at varying angles and thicknesses. I'm also using lots and lots of special blending modes to get that 'glowy' look to the graphics.

Where did the concept for the score multiplier bonus come from?
I like games that have additional 'discoverable' depth. The score multiplier, the bonus for reflecting shrapnel for points – all those ideas came from that desire to add a bit of 'organic' depth to the game. I'm trying to encourage people to try out different strategies as they go.

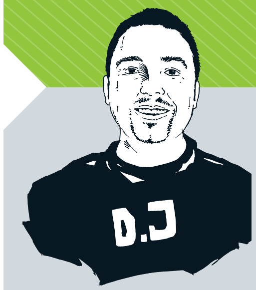
Can we expect any additional updates in the future? A multiplayer mode would be awesome.
YES YES YES. I can confirm that a multiplayer mode is currently in the works – both a deathmatch mode and a two-player co-operative mode where one player drives the tank and the other aims the turret and fires.

Why do you think the game has proven to be so popular on iTunes?
The game mechanics are pretty simple, so I anticipated the usual 'niche' sales, but it seems to have really appealed to a lot of gamers. I guess the simple answer is: its fun to play. People like blowing the crap out of things over and over.



HOMEBREW

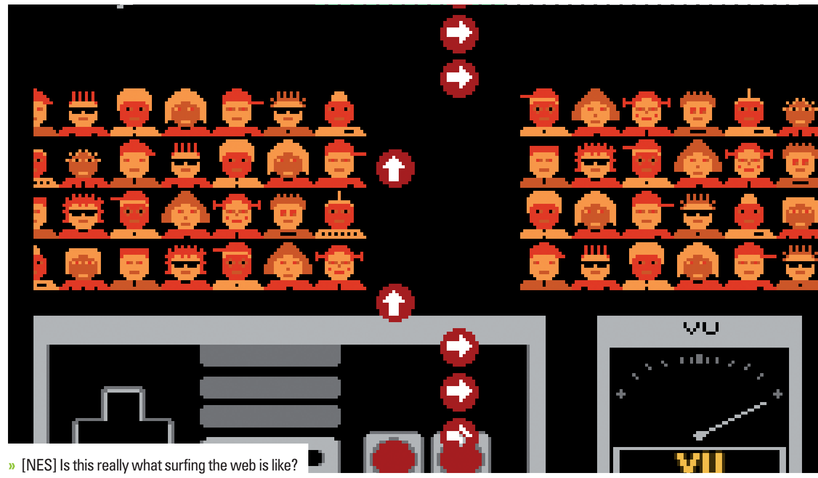
» The scene's latest news and reviews



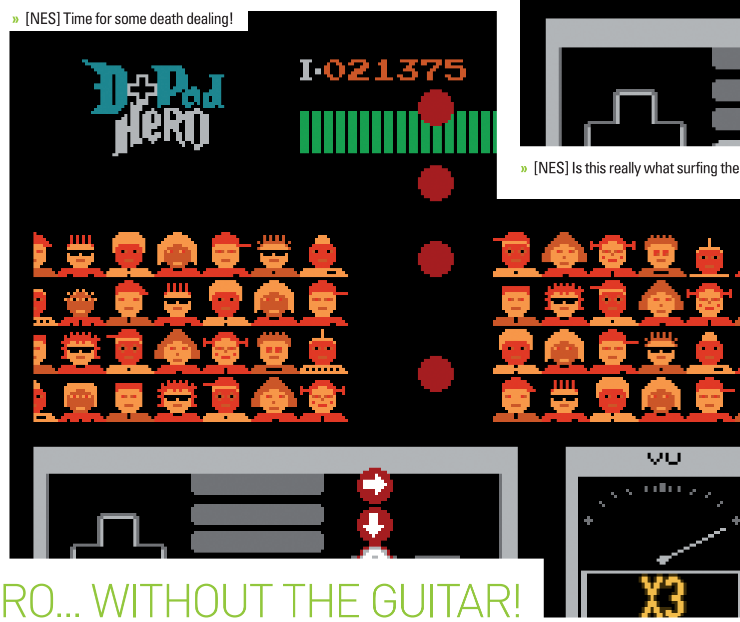
Welcome to another issue of Retro Gamer that's jam-packed with all the latest homebrew games. Jason Kelk plays air guitar with D-pad Hero, races through I Need Speed, puzzles over BeTiled! and loses his heart to Doris. Meanwhile Darran gets a kick out of the excellent remake, Kung Fu Master II. Last but by no means least, we have a chat with Park Productions' Eric Park

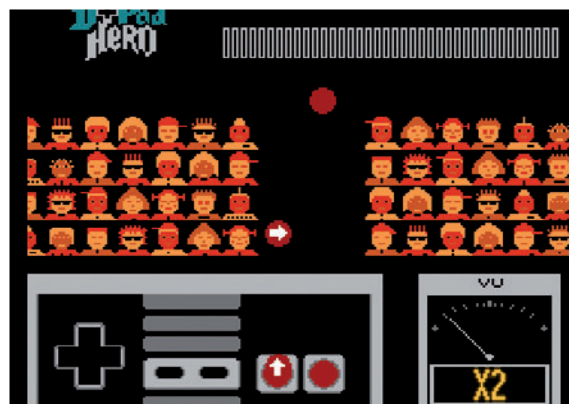


» [NES] Time for some death dealing!



» [NES] Is this really what surfing the web is like?





» [NES] Taking a trip through time and space.

IT'S GUITAR HERO... WITHOUT THE GUITAR!

D-PAD HERO



FORMAT: NES
DEVELOPED BY: KENT HANSEN & ANDREAS PEDERSEN
LINK: WWW.DPADHERO.COM
RELEASE DATE: 2009
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

The name *Guitar Hero* probably doesn't need much in the way of introduction, but for those whose outer Mongolian cave faces away from the local village, it's a rhythm-based game where the player, strumming their imitation 'axe', receives a series of colour-coded instructions as to which buttons on the guitar's fret they need to press on the beat. Since there isn't a guitar add-on available for the Nintendo Entertainment System, the player instead wields a pad to far less visual effect. During the main game a series of commands appear at the top of the play area and descend past the on-screen image of a NES control pad; when one of these commands draws level with either the A or B button on the virtual controller, the corresponding button must be pressed, with the D-pad being moved in the direction of the command's arrow should one be present. Points are awarded for each correct move and completing a sequence of moves pushes the multiplier up to give even greater rewards.

D-Pad Hero is very neatly presented but, whilst the graphics and in-game screens are nicely designed, it's the sound that really deserves highlighting for being some of the best music ever produced for a NES homebrew; the four tunes included are covers of *The Way You Make Me Feel* by Michael Jackson, *The Swing Of Things* by A-ha, *Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger* by Daft Punk and an inspired version of Guns N' Roses' *Sweet Child Of Mine*. Each piece gives the NES sound capabilities a hearty shove and it's actually worth downloading the game purely to listen to them.

This isn't the first stab at taking the popular plastic guitar-wielding game and shovelling its essence into an 8-bit machine, although unlike the C64 effort *Shredz 64*, this one doesn't require extra hardware and instead makes a brave attempt at re-imagining the gameplay for the NES controller; this is both a plus and a minus however because, although the resulting controls might not be particularly complex, at the speed the game expects players to respond a lot of people will find it remarkably easy to make mistakes. Even players who are well versed at similar rhythm-action games will probably need a while to get acclimatised to the simultaneous direction and button presses, and those of us not as endowed with natural rhythm will, depending on if there's an audience, initially cause either themselves or others great amusement by fluffing things up appallingly.

The unique selling point for *Guitar Hero* has to be looking a total plum in front of your friends by waving the guitar around; *D-Pad Hero* doesn't offer the possibility of doing something you'll regret when sober (at least, none that doesn't require extra creativity on the part of the player) but the developers have at least made a reasonable attempt at reproducing some of the game's magic on an 8-bit. Depending on the guests and their sense of humour, this should be enjoyable at similar parties to the ones where *Guitar Hero* or *Rock Band* are played.

86%

I NEED SPEED

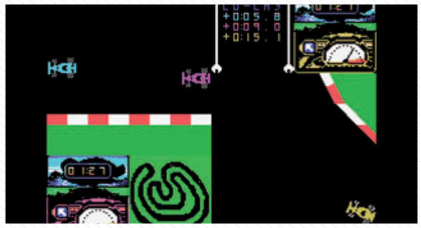
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** MSX » **DEVELOPER:** COMPUTER EMUZONE GAMES STUDIO
» **DOWNLOAD:** HTTP://COMPUTEREMUZONE.COM/FICHA.PHP?ID=752&L=EN

Rather than being a request for contraband, *I Need Speed* is a car racing game where one or two players get to clamber into their brightly coloured high-performance vehicles and squeal their way around various raceways whilst battling for supremacy over each other and the computer-controlled drivers. The action is presented from above, with the left half of the screen for one player and the right either for the second or one of the AI opponents.

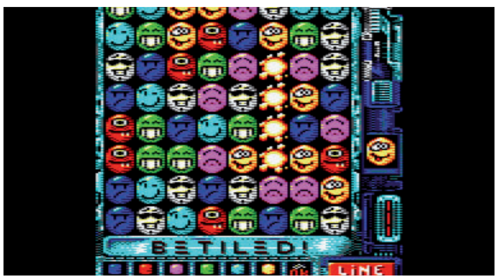
This certainly isn't the first overhead view racing game for an 8-bit but is unusual in that, despite being designed for multiple drivers, the solo option is still enjoyable. The coarse scrolling can initially be a little harsh on the eyes and the car controls are somewhat sensitive, so navigating the twistier courses can be frustrating, but a decent amount of play options (including configurable skill levels for each AI opponent) provide enough to keep most players putting pedal to metal.

79%

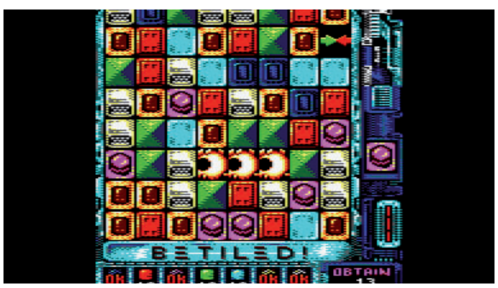




» [MSX] With half the race gone, there is half the race still to go.



» [Amstrad CPC] G'wan, give us a grin!



BE-TILED!

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** AMSTRAD CPC » **DEVELOPER:** COMPUTER EMUZONE GAMES
» **DOWNLOAD:** HTTP://COMPUTEREMUZONE.COM/FICHA.PHP?ID=19&L=EN

Mad scientist Dr Cirilus is on a mission; he's discovered that videogames contain energy crystals and, because he's a couple of plumbers short of a Mario franchise, Cirilus and his trusty if somewhat clumsy assistant want to harness that power to take over the world. Releasing energy from these game crystals is a matter of arranging them into groups of three or more and this can only be achieved by swapping a single crystal with its neighbour; as groups are cancelled out and vanish, the crystals above them drop and more appear, filling any gaps left.

The graphics are attractively drawn, with both the surrounds and tile sets using the CPC's bright and colourful palette strikingly; the 'heroes' tile set, made up of game characters such as Mario, Tiki the Kiwi and Sonic, looks particularly good. *Bejeweled* clones are commonplace, but *BeTiled!* has been implemented well and, along with two playing modes, some nice presentation and multiple tile sets, it sports a sensible way of handling situations where no moves are remaining, making it more enjoyable than most other variations.

88%

DORIS

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** ATARI 2600 » **DEVELOPER:** SEEMMO
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.ATARIAGE.COM/FORUMS/INDEX.PHP?SHOWTOPIC=138445

Poor Doris is delirious with love and for some inexplicable reason this doesn't manifest itself in the usual way; instead it sees her on a mission to collect the hearts that appear randomly around the screen. Presumably because love can be fleeting, those hearts don't hang around and slowly fade away. If our heroine misses one or is hit by one of the blocks tumbling through the play area, the game is over.

All of the visuals are very simple indeed and reminiscent of the earliest of Atari 2600 titles, being clear and easy to discern but lacking animation or the finesse of more recent sprites such as the maid from *Elevators Amiss*, for example. The game itself is absolutely minute (this review is close to the same length) so there isn't a lot of variety but, despite that lack of complexity or indeed much of a sense of progression, it'll keep most gamers occupied for a while at least.

73%



» [Atari 2600] With you I feel the other half of my heartbeat.



WHAT'S BREWING?

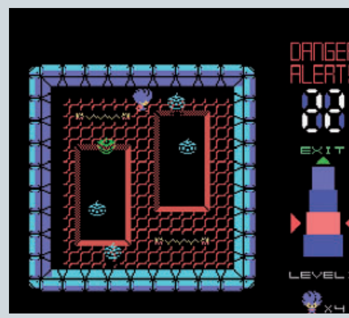
All the latest news from the homebrew community



» [C64] Amusing deaths abound in the classic *Creatures*.

» Exterminating Earth-ridden slime since 1990

After the anniversary edition of the superb *Mayhem In Monsterland*, Psytronik (www.psytronik.com/) has managed to secure permission from developers John and Steve Rowlands to reissue another of their C64 titles. Released in 1990 by Thalamus, *Creatures* stars Ewok lookalike Clyde Radcliffe who must run, jump and breathe fire through the levels in order to save his kinfolk, the Fuzzy Wuzzies, from the demons' torture chambers.



» [MSX] *Danger Tower* was voted 'Most Original Game'.

» Scores on the doors

Results for the MSXdev 2008 which pooled an impressive 12 releases have been released. Third place went to regular contributors Karoshi Corporation's platformer *La Corona Encantada*, Computer EmuZone Games Studio crossed the line second with their racing game *I Need Speed* (reviewed this issue) and the winner was dungeon crawler *Deep Dungeon*, by Arturo Ragozini, John Hassink and Richard Cornelisse. Full results are at http://msxdev.msxblue.com/

» Get your fix of homebrew news and reviews

So you've found yourself wanting even more homebrew news and reviews but simply can't wait until the next delectable issue of Retro Gamer? Well for those needing a further fix, the fifth instalment of CD-based magazine RGCD (no relation to RG, they're just good friends!) should now be available to download and indeed read. The CD image can be grabbed from its website at www.rgcd.co.uk/

HOMEBREW

» The scene's latest news and reviews

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community

» You star

After being impressed with Sokurah's *Psycho Pigs* remake, we've found another title to get excited about, only this time Darran is doing all the whooping and incessant cheering. It would appear that Retro Remakes regular Dragon is working on an update to the excellent *Star Control* and it's already looking mighty pretty. There should be a demo up very soon so be sure to head on over to http://retroremakes.com/forum/index.php/topic,45.0.html in order to check *Star Control*'s progress.



» At last, it's Retro Gamer: the movie!

» The forum speaks

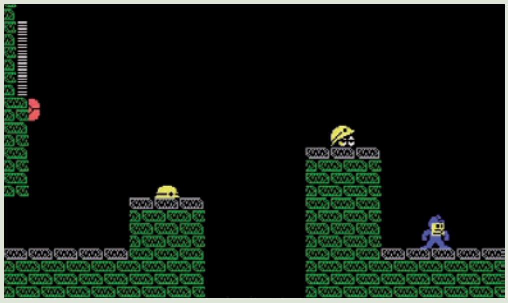
Okay, so this isn't exactly homebrew, but it's so funny we just had to include it. Forum member Monkey Puzzle has made an animated movie that uses various posts from the Retro Gamer forum and the end result is absolutely hilarious, especially if you remember reading the included quotes when they were first posted. Visit http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PzvbLjPlrY&feature=channel_page if you fancy a giggle.



Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on **Retro Gamer**'s Flash game of the month. This month we look at ***The Fisher***

WHY DO FLASH games always have brilliantly simplistic concepts? *The Fisher* has you firing off a fishing line as it swings back and forth. Catch enough fish in the allotted time and you can then use the money to buy bonus items for the next round. Very addictive, download it from www.box10.com/the-fisher.html

REMAKES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING...



MEG4KMAN

» **DOWNLOAD:** HTTP://TINYURL.COM/MEG4KMAN

S.H

We're always impressed with the harsh conditions that homebrew coders put themselves under when creating new games and *Meg4KMan* is a particularly stunning example. Put forward for this year's Java4K competition – yes, it's crammed into 4 kilobytes – this is a wondrous effort by Marcus Persson. Featuring Capcom's blue mascot and spread across 25 deviously designed screens, *Meg4KMan* is not without its flaws (controls are incredibly twitchy) but remains an amazing achievement. Designed as a speed run game (Persson reckons you should congratulate yourself if you can successfully complete it in less than five minutes) and fully playable online, *Meg4KMan* is an absolute gem. More please Persson.

Remake of the Month

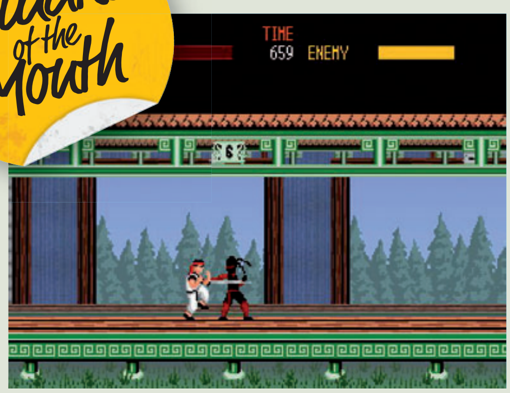


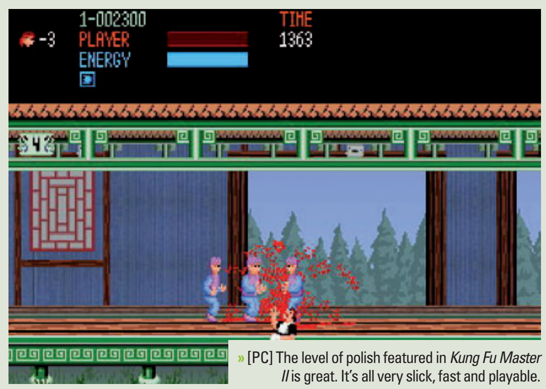
SUPER MARIO KART

» **DOWNLOAD:** HTTP://TINYURL.COM/SUPER-MARIO-KART

D.J

It's a brave person who attempts to remake something as flawless as the original *Super Mario Kart*. Sadly, Grindalf's remake – an entry for last year's Retro Remakes competition – just doesn't cut the mustard. We can forgive the lacklustre menus, often hilariously bad visuals – with Toad looking particularly hilarious – but it's the gameplay that's sorely lacking here. Computer AI seems extremely suspect, with races feeling predetermined within seconds of starting, while the sluggish and often suspect controls will make you wonder how long Grindalf spent in the play-testing department. Now admittedly, this is a far better effort that we could ever, ever hope to achieve, but at the end of the day we're reviewers, not coders, and we know what we like. *Super Mario Kart*, sadly isn't it.





» [PC] The level of polish featured in *Kung Fu Master II* is great. It's all very slick, fast and playable.

KUNG FU MASTER II

» **DOWNLOAD:** HTTP://TINYURL.COM/KUNG-FU-MASTER-II

D.J

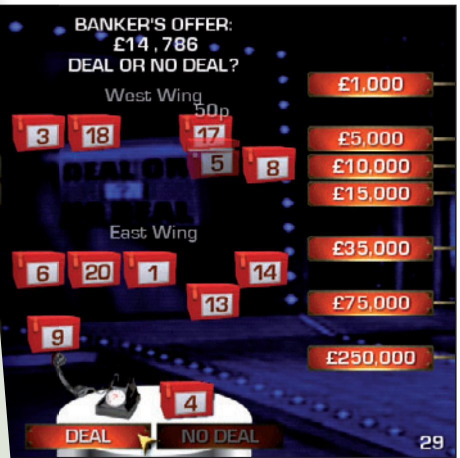
There were certainly some good entries at last year's Retro Remakes competition – so many in fact that we're only now starting to make any leeway into them. With Gary Gasko's homage to the NES's *Kung Fu* (in turn based on Irem's excellent *Kung Fu Master*) being the latest that we've just discovered.

While it doesn't feature as many new enhancements as issue 61's wonderful remake of *Bruce Lee* – notable exceptions being a combo meter and the ability to chuck out a Hadouken fireball at the cost of 20% of your health – there's still a hell of a lot to enjoy about this fine, highly polished remake.

There are no fancy menus, but the game's slickness is immediately apparent, with all the on-screen enemies being immediately recognisable as they do their best to take down Thomas and stop him from reaching his beloved Sylvia. The game also moves along at a pleasingly nippy fate, and while this means that you'll initially get surprised by speedy enemies, you soon get used to the frantic pace at which *Kung Fu Master II* runs.

Ultimately, what we really like about Gasko's remake is just how much fun it is to actually play. Like the best homebrew coders, he's taken a gem from our past and brought it kicking and screaming into the present – and for that we're eternally grateful.









» **Above:** Park Productions' *Deal Or No Deal* had to be taken down from their website. It's apparently much better than the official effort. » **Top Right:** Fans of the arcade and Amstrad versions of *RoboCop* would do well to check out this remake; it's excellent fun, if a little on the hard side. » **Right:** If you've ever played Codemasters' *Professional Jet Bike Simulator* then *Championship Wave Racer* will be instantly recognisable.

HOMEBREW HEROES

THIS MONTH WE VISIT SCOTLAND AND SPEAK TO **ERIK PARK**, ONE THIRD OF PARK PRODUCTIONS, A GROUP WHO'VE WORKED ON EVERYTHING FROM DIZZY TO POWER RANGERS

Retro Gamer: So Eric, when did you first get into coding?
Eric Park: With the Amstrad CPC464 in Locomotive Basic in 1989. I started with magazine listings before creating *Robocop Jr.* Other Basic titles included a football-themed *Pong* and a text-based WWF wrestling game. Then I moved onto the Amiga 1200 with games that featured in *Amiga Format*, including the *Die Hard*-inspired *No Escape*, street fighter *Blood Brawl*, and overhead racer *County Racers*.

RG: Which coding tools/programmes do you prefer to use and why?
EP: Coding in Blitz 2D, Max & 3D, all used for their quick start-up and easy language. Paintshop for 2D graphics while Cinema 4D is our 3D modeller first discovered on the Amiga. Sound-wise we tend to use the free Soundprobe and Audacity.

RG: How many people work on Park Productions games?
EP: It's just myself and my two brothers, Brian and Allan. I'm the coder of the group, Brian takes on video editing and file conversion, while Allan play-tests with the uncanny ability to crash anything.

RG: How do you decide on what games you'll work on?
EP: Movies and retro games are our influences but generally a game type will be chosen that is both fun to play and code while being achievable in terms of code complexity and the time frame we have.

RG: So have you considered programming full time?
EP: No, because having to learn programming would suck the fun right out of it. For now we code because we want to and enjoy the challenge of trial and error learning. We're currently playing around with XNA, which is both tricky and exciting.

RG: Which game are you most proud of?
EP: We're most proud of the *Robocop 2D* trilogy because of the emails we are still receiving about them from happy gamers.

RG: How long does a typical game take to complete?
EP: One month for a mini game, while *Robocop 2D 3* took us nearly two years to complete, even though we were using the same game engine as before.

RG: Is it the *Robocop* games you like or the films?
EP: The 8-bit and arcade games were our introduction to *Robocop* before the film. We like both the games and films – you can't go wrong with a titanium cyborg cop that's out for revenge. Our next game… *Robocop 3D*.

HIGH FIVE
The homebrew games Eric can't live without

1 **Beats Of Rage (Senile):** Multi-platform *Streets Of Rage* remake with excellent reworking of the original's graphics and remixed music. A classic side-scrolling beat-'em-up.

2 **Smashell (Antab):** Play as a spiked turtle-shelled tyre! Smash enemies on a floating 3D platform while unlocking new moves. Very polished title.

3 **Johnny Platform's Biscuit Romp (IshiEiketsu):** Popular XNA platformer, simple but fun. Collect coffee cups to open the exit door. Double jumps, block pushing and biscuits!

4 **Auto Cross Racing (KJM Software):** Slick and well-presented overhead racer with classic controls, turbos and featuring hidden secret areas found under trees.

5 **Knight Lore (Wolfy):** 3D remake of *Knight Lore* that retains the original's viewpoint. Not complete yet but it's looking very promising.

RG: Do you ever have to obtain permission when remaking games?
EP: We make games purely as fans, for fun and all our games are freeware, though we have never gained permission. The only company to contact us was the *Deal Or No Deal* quiz show. We had completed our own version called *Desktop: Deal Or No Deal* and they released an official game – which was poor – so they ordered that our version was removed from our site.

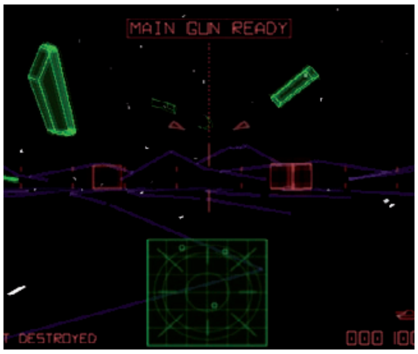
RG: The majority of your games are PC and Mac. What about 8-bit computers?
EP: With tools available today, creating your own games is now possible. For instance, *Robocop 2D 3* and *Ghostbusters II* run on PC, Mac & Linux. But you must admire how great games have been crammed into 64K of home computers.

RG: Have you sent your *Dizzy* game to the Oliver Twins?
EP: Not as yet, although we have posted it at the Yolkfolk.com, as we know the Oliver Twins often visit it. We'd love to hear what they think about our 3D *Dizzy*, however, after Deal or No Deal we're extremely wary about contacting creators. On the other hand Tony Van, the producer and designer of the Mega-CD *Power Rangers* FMV game, was extremely helpful providing background information and gameplay advice for us.

RG: Why do you feel homebrew games remain so popular?
EP: Homebrew tends to be coded by individuals giving games a unique touch, unlike today's games that are usually a generic game engine re-skinned. Homebrew also has that fun and nostalgia factor with 'pick up and go' gameplay and no need for complicated tutorial levels.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**



» [iPhone] If you're going to knock the iPhone, at least play games like *Vector Tanks* first. It could well change your opinion of it.

IPHONE LOVE

Dear Retro Gamer,
I just wanted to write in and say that I thoroughly enjoyed the iPhone article that you featured in issue 61. Initially I was disappointed to see such a new machine receive so much coverage within the magazine, but I feel that a strong case was put forward to why the iPhone was featured. I love playing classic retro games, so the fact that so many of them are available on the phone is of great interest to me, and I'm sure that many other readers would have been impressed with it as well. *Vector Tanks* and *Ms Pac-Man* look particularly impressive and while the phones are currently too expensive, I may now invest in an actual iPod touch instead.
Benjamin Cross via email

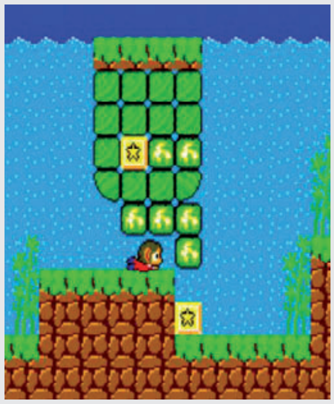
IPHONE HATE

Dear Darran,
How does it feel to be a sell out and be in Apple's pockets? Your massive coverage of the iPhone had absolutely no relevance to the retro gaming community and it's shameful that you should stoop so low in order to attract new customers. If I want to read about new machines then I'll pick up the likes of *gamesTM* and *Edge*. I buy Retro Gamer for the nostalgia fix it offers me and it sickens me to see so much coverage for a machine that has absolutely no relevance to the magazine. If this sort of blatant advertising continues then I'll have no choice but to cancel my subscription. Shame on you.
Matthew Lightbourne via email

Since Retro Gamer started back up, our aim has always been to focus on the games themselves, regardless of the platforms they may appear on. Covering old machines will always be Retro Gamer's main priority, but we'd be doing our readers a disservice if we didn't tell them that these new machines were capable of playing (and playing well) classics like *Pac-Man, Pole Position* and *Space Invaders*. While we'll continue to review the latest iPhone games, we won't be returning to the machine itself any time soon. The aim of the article was to establish the machine as a suitable platform for retro gamers and for better or worse that's now been done.

STAR LETTER

DOWNLOAD DEVILS



» [Master System] Mike turns his nose up at VC games and prefers the real deal. What's your opinion?

Dear Retro Gamer,
Why do all the current companies, computer and otherwise, seem intent on turning to digital distribution? I can sort of understand the appeal of buying games from Steam, or using services like the Virtual Console and Xbox Live Arcade, but is this really benefiting us gamers in the long term?

I'm a keen collector of Sega's Master System, and one of the greatest joys I have is putting aside a small portion of cash each month and using it to trawl around car boots looking for those precious titles I've still yet to own. I've been collecting for the machine ever since I first picked one up when it was first released, and now, many years on I still own it. A friend pointed out that with the games now starting to appear on the VC I would be better off ditching my precious collection and moving to that instead.

His argument was that the games were identical and more convenient to play, but I felt he wasn't looking at the bigger picture. What will happen when the next Wii comes out? Will I still be able to play the games I have purchased on the next machine? Will I be able to download titles I have purchased from several years back? I'm guessing no.

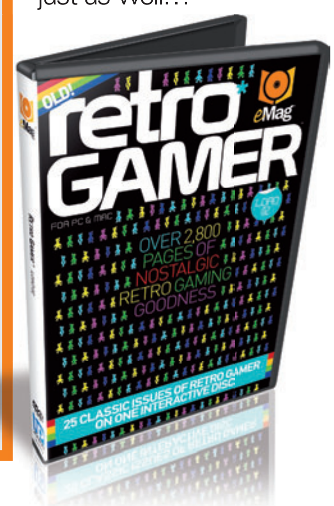
Digital downloads may well be the future, but I'll be sticking with my Master System carts, rubbish grid artwork and all.

Kindest regards,
Mike James Liverpool

Those are some really interesting points you've raised, Mike, and you've definitely given us a good idea for a future feature. While we write it up you can sit back, smug in the knowledge that you've just earned yourself a Retro Gamer eMag Load 2.

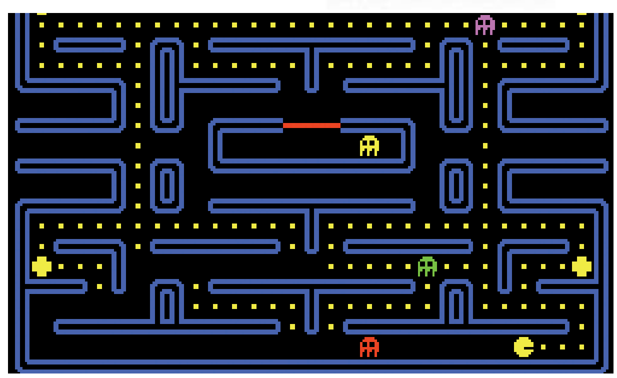
WIN!

Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our brand new eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 2**, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well…



FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

Dear Retro Gamer,
A little while ago I imported an Elektronika BK-0010, a popular home computer from the



» [ZX Spectrum] *Pac-Man* is available on a wide variety of formats and while we prefer *Ms Pac-Man*, there's no denying the original game's importance.



CONTACT US

Snail Mail: Retro Gamer, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ

Email: retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Next month: John Twiddy



BURNING QUESTION?

HAVE YOU ever had a burning question that you've always wanted to ask? Do you often sit at your computer desk wondering if David Braben will ever patch things up with Ian Bell, or if Matthew Smith checks into hotels as Miner Willy? If you do, then head on over to our forum where you can put your burning questions to whoever we're interviewing. The best questions will then get answered and revealed in the next issue. Visit the forum now at www.retrogamer.net/forum



» [Xbox 360] If you've not enjoyed the delights of *Street Fighter IV* yet then you really haven't lived.

Soviet Union during the mid-Eighties. Most home computers in the Soviet Union were apparently home-made Spectrum clones, but this was one of the few computers that was actually based on an original design. It turns out there was a large library of games for the machine, and although many are just ports of Spectrum games, there's quite a few original games too. Most of them are garbage, but some aren't that bad. A couple of people I have spoken to thought this was just the kind of thing that would fit into Retro Gamer and suggested you might be interested in publishing something about it. I'm not Russian and I'm far from an expert on the ins and outs of the Soviet gaming scene (I knew nothing about it before I bought the BK-0010 off eBay on a whim), but I think it's an interesting subject that virtually nothing is known about.

Chris Collet via email

Thanks for the heads-up Chris. It's certainly an interesting-looking machine and definitely needs some coverage within the magazine along with plenty of other obscure computers. We personally think that this project would be perfect for ex Retro Gamer staff writer John Szczepaniak, so we'll have a chat with him and see if we can pique his interest in it.

> "It turns out there was a large library of games for the [BK-0010] machine"

RETROBATE PROFILE



PAC-TASTIC

Dear Retro Gamer,
I just wanted to say a big thank you for the superb coverage that *Pac-Man* received in issue 61. The cover looked absolutely astounding (even if it did take me an age to find the mag and it came complete with an ugly sticker on it), but the article inside was even better. I don't know how you were able to get hold of Toru Iwatani, but I'm bloody glad you did. I loved playing *Pac-Man* as a kid, so I found it fascinating to hear that there was more to the game than it originating from a slice of pizza. One thing I would say though is why didn't you get Stuart Campbell to write his long overdue *Pac-Man* article? That would have absolutely sealed the deal for me. Here's hoping you'll be covering more classic arcade games very soon.

Scott Wilson, London

Glad you liked the *Pac-Man* article, Scott. While we agree that Stuart's piece is »

BEAT THE TEAM

Think you're good at retro games? Then see if you can beat the staff at some of their favourite games



DARRAN

CHOSEN GAME: SHINOBI

Why I picked it: Thanks to Sega's recent compilation.

Handy advice: Complete levels without firing shurikens and magic to boost your score.



High-Score: 109,420

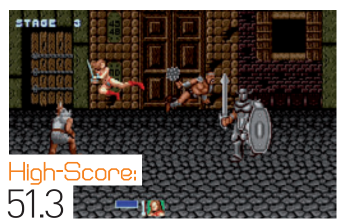


STUART

CHOSEN GAME: GOLDEN AXE

Why I picked it: I've been getting really stuck into the *Ultimate Mega Drive Collection*.

Handy advice: The number of lives lost greatly affects your overall score. So don't adjust them.



High-Score: 51.3



MIKE

CHOSEN GAME: MR DO!

Why I picked it: 27 years is a long time for an arcade game to hold anyone's attention. **Handy Advice:** Use scenes 1-10 to garner as many extra Mr Dos as possible. Finish levels with joined tunnels quickly. After scene 10, forget score – end the level ASAP.



High-Score: 643,050

From the forum

» To have your say visit www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, **Retro Gamer** asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know...

What is your favourite handheld?

ID: necronom
The handheld 'Time Out' LCD game *Fireman, Fireman*. I've only had a couple of these old LCD ones, and nothing more advanced, so that wins. It's also the first one I got.

ID: oldtimer
For me, it's got to be the Sega Game Gear. As well as playing games on it, you can watch the TV and listen to the radio. The graphics are not that bad either, although it does tend to blur a bit and eat the old AA batteries. I still love it though.

ID: paranoid marvin
Tomy Tronic's *Sky Attack* – there was nothing quite like it back in the day.

ID: nokgod
Whilst the DS/Lite is very nice with its touch-screens and Wi-Fi, my favourite handheld is my GBA SP. I'm sure I actually drooled when I first saw it advertised, and it was one of the few machines that made me think "I have to have it!" Very practical too, the clamshell design protecting the screen and genuinely small enough to fit in your pocket and a battery life that turned all the other handhelds green with envy. Plus all the classic Ninty franchises... BRILLIANT!

ID: TMR
I'm going to have to say my (very) well-worn Game Boy Advance; I've got loads of shoot-'em-ups for it, there are even more for the Game Boy as well and I've even got the cartridge for a game I did graphics for – yay!

ID: Xesh
The only handheld console I've used is the DS Lite, so that's my choice on that matter. If we're talking standalone handhelds then it will have to be *Galaxy Invader 1000*.

ID: Team Alfie
I can tell you what my least favourite is. DS Lite. Ever since that dastardly addictive retina burner came out I've been slowly going blind. And now there appears to be a battle between Nintendo and Sony to see who can make the brightest screen. Us ageing gamers won't be able to take much more of it. A vote for the original GBA is a vote against floaters.

ID: Smurph
Console? Then quite easily the Neo Geo Pocket Color – the best joystick/D-pad on a handheld ever, plus out of a reasonably small roster of games, 80% are well worth owning: not least of which *Card Fighters Clash*, *Cotton* and *Match Of The Millennium*. Standalone would be *3-D Sky Attack* from Tomy, which to my young eyes was virtual reality... As long as I stood under a lamp.

ID: ipmarks
A tough choice, as I'm not a great handheld fan, but one of either Grandstand *Scramble*, Game & Watch *Donkey Kong Jr*, or the original Game Boy... Probably G&W *Donkey Kong Jr*, as I have special memories of playing it as a child under the duvet with a torch, when I should have been asleep.

ID: Mayhem
Probably the Neo Geo Pocket Color. So many excellent games and not many duffs ones for starters. Plus it had the talents of SNK and Capcom working on some classic crossovers.

ID: mohicankid
Best handheld ever? Sorry but it has to be the DS. I can go wherever I want and bring it with me without having to bring a bag full of batteries. I can team up with friends on the train without tripping the conductor! I can play a variety of new and classic games without needing an adaptor, but mostly, it's because I can play it with the volume up without worrying about wasting the batteries!

ID: sirclive1
I'd vouch for the Game Gear, not the best handheld by far, but I do love it. I picked up the Sonic pack 17 years ago for Christmas and had a wonderful time playing *Super Kick Off* and *Halley Wars*.

ID: megamixer
Probably the GBA as it's almost like a handheld 16-bit era console given some of the games on the system, including *Metroid Zero Mission*, the port of SNES *Link To The Past* and the *Final Fantasy* series.

ID: Nic Maminer
Has to be the GBA with a built-in light (SP for backwards compatibility and the Micro for portability). I dismissed Game Boy consoles before this time as being too hard to see. Once this technology was reached, I was hooked and really enjoyed the back catalogue too.

ID:TwoHeadedBoy
Hmm, I was thinking either Neo Geo Pocket, Lynx, Game Gear or PC-Engine GT, then I remembered the GP2X which lets me play every game I've ever loved (pre-PlayStation anyway).

YOUR OPINION PLEASE!

VIRTUA FIGHTER 2

Weekend_Warrior Okay. So the game keeps freezing on me every time I beat Sarah in any game mode. I remember hearing about this glitch somewhere but I don't recall having any issues before. And strangely, I cannot seem to find any info on the net about this.

Mootown This doesn't help, but get the Jap version. That US box art sucks balls.

sigma Is your disc scratched/dirty?

Weekend_Warrior All right. I actually discovered that by changing the enemy level (Difficulty) to Easy or Hard, I could then get past this freeze glitch and continue the game. So apparently it only happens on the Normal setting. Go figure. Well anyway, anyone else want to talk about the *VF* series?

Slick2097 Never got on with *Virtua Fighter* games... much preferred the *Tekken*s and *Toshinden*s of the 3D fighting worlds...

nesmaster I don't like *Virtua Fighter* or *Tekken*. *Fighting Vipers* and *Soul Calibur* FTW.

Wii IS BEST

sigma Surely the Wii is the ultimate Nintendo console?

Slick2097 Nope, the SNES is.

sigma The Wii can play SNES games though.

Slick2097 But it's not an actual SNES is it, and I'm too tight to buy the VC games and the extra £15 for a pad when I already have a SNES and a Wildcard.

Lorfarius Has to be the SNES by a mile. *Chrono Trigger* people!

sigma It looks like the Wii is set to become the ultimate Nintendo console in sales figures terms at least. That's ultimate enough as far as Nintendo themselves are concerned.

famicom69 The Virtual Console could have been amazing, but it just seems so slapdash.

woody.cool The NES and the SNES are far better than the Wii, IMO.

RESIDENT EVIL

megamixer *RE* is all about camera angles, crap controls and creepy locations.

jdanddiet They are among the greatest games ever created and huge swathes of my life have been lost to all four of the first games, and a few hours on the movies as well!

markopoloman *RE4* on the Wii is a brilliant game. *RE4* should be called *RE: How it should be*!

James A *Resident Evil 4* is one of the greatest games ever made. Period. I think it was a very brave move to take the series in such a radical direction.

krusty40 I don't agree because it took it so far in the other direction that it lost everything that made *RE* so brilliant. The puzzles were gone, there was too much combat and the monsters were so numerous that they inspired no fear after a few hours.

Old VS NEW

Each month we'll be finding out if the classics are better than their successors. This month, which 3D Mario game is the best?

Super Mario 64



Super Mario Galaxy



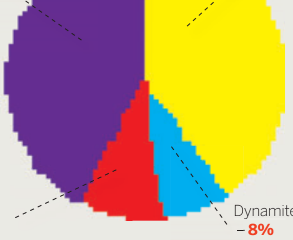
47% | 53%

Nesmaster "Too tough to call... *Super Mario 64*."

Garystone 10 "*Galaxy*... the best 3D platformer ever."

HOT TOPIC

What's the best Spectrum platformer of all time?



"I've played all those games except for *Dynamite Dan*. I have to say that my favourite is *Chuckie Egg*."
– Xesh

"I know I'll probably be the only one voting for *JSW*, but put simply this was the first game that made me think that a whole world could be living in your computer."
– Timothy Lumsden

CONTACT US

Snail Mail: Retro Gamer, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ **Email:** retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

going to be well worth looking forward to, we thought chatting to the original creator was a far bigger draw both for the magazine and those who might only occasionally pick Retro Gamer up. *Pac-Man*'s 30th anniversary is next year, which would be the perfect opportunity to cover the classic franchise.

FIGHTING TALK

Dear Stuart,

I just wanted to saw how spot-on you were with your review of *Street Fighter IV* in issue 60. It's an astonishing fighter: immediately accessible to newcomers, but featuring a staggering depth that only the best beat-'em-ups possess. I've been playing one-on-one fighting games for years now and Capcom's latest release is easily the best I've ever played. I'm glad you agreed with me. I noticed that you reviewed the PS3 version so could you perhaps share your gamertag with me so I could challenge you online?

Keith Miller via email

Glad you enjoyed the review, Keith. It really is a superb fighter and deserves all the success it's currently generating. Sadly, Stuart doesn't have the PS3 version, but Darran does. If you fancy giving him a challenge then his PSN tag is Strideristhebest. As if it would have been anything else…

AKIRA QUERY

Dear Retro Gamer,

I am hoping you can help me out. Many, many years ago I was at a friend's house playing on his Commodore 64 and he showed me his new game that I just cannot remember the name of, so let me describe it to you as best I can.

It had a cartoon Japanese anime style of presentation, your character was a futuristic guy on a red motorbike (like Akira) and it involved you driving him down a series of roads (using a third-person perspective I think) with branching intersections where you had to decide which path to take. Every now and then you would be attacked by enemies which would trigger a stylised cut-scene of your bike transforming into a kind of hovering attack ship. This would then place you into a side-on *Defender*-style game and once all the enemies were dealt with, you then continued on your way.

This game made a big impression on me at the time, it had exceptional presentation and I loved the exploration of driving through the (what seemed like an) open world.

Hopefully one of your readers can shed some light on this game. It would be most appreciated.

Many thanks,

Scott Pearson, New Zealand

We've put your answer to readers on the forum and most people seem to think that the game you're thinking of is actually ICE's *Akira*, which may explain why you were so impressed by it as it was released on the Amiga and not the Commodore 64. We've included a picture as well, so hopefully that may jog your memory.



Hopefully ICE's *Akira* is the game you remember, Scott. If it isn't then get back in touch with us.

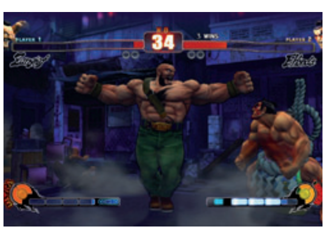
DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

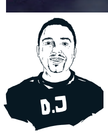
Fight! Fight!

This month Darran and Stuart have been hassling Steve into playing their favourite versions of *Jurassic Park*. Stuart maintains that the Mega Drive version is the best as "you can play as a raptor!" while Darran argues that the top-down view and pseudo 3D in the SNES effort makes for a better playing experience. Steve ended up choosing the Mega Drive version because it looked "funner". Needless to say he was swiftly packed off to finish the issue and make tea for the rest of the month.

> "This game made a big impression on me at the time, it had exceptional presentation"

CURRENTLY PLAYING





DARRAN

Street Fighter IV

I'm still loving *Street Fighter IV*. I've spent a fortune on buying all the costumes, but it's so worth it. Zangief looks simply amazing in his new Mike Haggar outfit, while Fei-Long now looks even more like Bruce Lee. Awesome stuff.

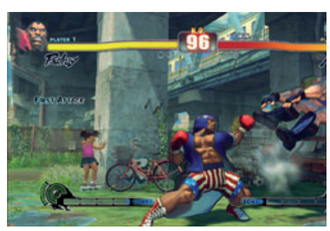


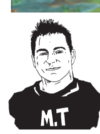


STUART

Mega Drive Ultimate Collection

I'm tackling this, mainly because Darran has the platinum trophy on the PS3 version and is making me feel inferior. I'll be buggered if I'm going to complete *Mean Bean Machine* though.





MIKE

Street Fighter IV

Characters, visuals and gameplay all tick the box. But every time I look like beating Darran, another Zangief cheating ultra move somehow destroys me, making me feel cheated and yet wanting more at the same time.

retro GAMER

Imagine Publishing Ltd
Richmond House 33 Richmond Hill
Bournemouth Dorset BH2 6EZ
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586200
Web: www.imagine-publishing.co.uk
www.retrogamer.net

Magazine team

Editor **Darran Jones**
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ 01202 586237

Editor in Chief **Nick Jones**
Senior Designer **Stephen Williams**
Staff Writer **Stuart Hunt**
Senior Sub Editor **Sarah Slee**
Senior Art Editor **Greg Whitaker**
Head of Design **Ross Andrews**

Contributors
Carly Barrett, Mike Bevan, Richard Burton, Stuart Campbell, Martyn Carroll, David Crookes, Paul Drury, Craig Grannell, Jason Kelk, Phil King, Damien McFerran, Mike Tooley

Special Thanks
To Robert Saunders and Nintendo

Advertising
Digital or printed media packs are available on request
Commercial Director Ross Webster
☎ 01202 586418
ross.webster@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Head of Sales James Hanslip
☎ 01202 586423
james.hanslip@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Account Manager James Haley
☎ 01202 586432
james.haley@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Advertising Sales Executive Ben Taylor
☎ 01202 586439
ben.taylor@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Classified Sales Executive Kriss Scott
☎ 01202 586420
kriss.scott@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Salesperson of the Year
JAMES HALEY

International
Retro Gamer is available for licensing. Contact the International department to discuss partnership opportunities.
International Manager Cathy Blackman
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586401
licensing@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Subscriptions
Subscriptions Manager Lucy Nash
☎ 01202 586443
lucy.nash@imagine-publishing.co.uk
To order a subscription to **Retro Gamer**
☎ (UK) 0844 848 8412
☎ (Overseas) +44 (0)1795 592872
Email: retrogamer@servicehelpline.co.uk
13 issue subscription (UK) – £51.90
13 issue subscription (Europe) – £70
13 issue subscription (ROW) – £80

Circulation
Circulation & Export Manager Darren Pearce
☎ 01202 586200

Production
Production Director Jane Hawkins
☎ 01202 586200

Founders
Managing Director Damian Butt
Finance Director Steven Boyd
Creative Director Mark Kendrick

Printing & Distribution
Printed by St Ives Andover, West Portway, Andover, SP10 3SF

Distributed by Seymour Distribution, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT ☎ 0207 429 4000

ISSN 1742-3155

IMAGINE PUBLISHING

recycle
When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE 21 MAY 2009

LOAD 64



THE NINJA SPEAKS

John Twiddy, the creator of one of the C64's most famous franchises comes out of hiding to discuss The Last Ninja, System 3 and what really happened to the Amiga version of Putty Squad

MORE EXCITING FEATURES

» John Romero reveals the secrets behind the excellent *Wolfenstein 3D* and how it went on to launch a brand new genre that's still going great guns (sorry) today.

» Keeping with the first-person shooter theme, key developers from the industry explain why the genre has become so important to the industry and also how it continually shapes it.

» Not content with revealing Miner Willy's dirty little secrets, Stuart Campbell turns his attention to *Tetris* and reveals all manner of crazy spin-offs that most aren't aware of. Just don't tell him that it's a puzzle game…

RETRO DIRECTORY

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE LISTING ITS FAVOURITE WEBSITES AND INTERVIEWING SOME OF THEIR KEY MEMBERS. THIS MONTH WE SPEAK TO OLIVIER BOISSEAU, CO-FOUNDER OF THE TRULY INFORMATIVE OLD-COMPUTERS.COM

THE RETRO GAMER DIRECTORY

ATARI AGE
www.atariage.com
Excellent site dedicated to all aspects of Atari gaming.

ATARI ORG
www.atari.org
Another Atari site with every machine since the 2600.

AUSSIE ARCADE
www.aussiearcade.com.au
A fantastic arcade forum catering for an Aussie audience.

CPC ZONE
www.cpczone.net
Great site for the Amstrad range of computers.

C64 GAME ENDINGS
www.c64endings.co.uk
Over 260 endings for classic and not so classic C64 games.

LEMON64
www.lemon64.com
Superb Commodore 64 site filled with insightful reviews and a friendly forum.

LEMON AMIGA
www.lemonamiga.com
This great Amiga site is run by Kim Lemon, owner of Lemon 64.

MACRETRO
www.macretro.tk
Getting emulators up and running on the Mac, this is a brilliant site.

NEO-GEO.COM
www.neo-geo.com
Dedicated to SNK's systems, but with lots of other stuff to enjoy.

WEEKEND GAMER
www.weekend-gamer.co.uk
Great site that covers a range of topics, from TV to gaming.

SYSTEM16
www.system16.com
Sega focused, but also covers arcade games.

GAMES THAT WEREN'T
http://gtw64.retro-net.de
Where cancelled C64 games get discovered.

NTSC-UK
www.ntsc-uk.com
This site is devoted to imports, but there's a retro section, too.

OLD-COMPUTERS.COM
www.old-computers.com
If you think the 2600 is ancient, visit this fascinating site.



Retro Gamer: When did you set up the website?

Olivier Boisseau: Thierry Schembri launched what was certainly the first old computers website all the way back in 1995, which was called computingmuseum.com. I personally started my own website in 1998 under the name 8-Bit Rendez-Vous, and I also bought the old-computers.com domain name. We later met up during a French collector meeting in 2000 (Vieumikro meeting, in Toulouse, France). We had the same vision of what should be an old computer museum website at a time when most collectors were only interested in showing their own personal collections off. We didn't care about that and thought we had the skills to merge our own sites and do something that was far better. As a result we eventually launched old-computers.com in 2001.

RG: Why base it primarily on computers instead of consoles?

OB: At the time almost nobody really cared about the history of games consoles, and to begin with there were no dedicated websites around. I personally pushed to develop the console section. I even gave a special section to *Pong* systems (though I think this may have been a mistake now). At the time I had a personal project with another friend dedicated to *Pong* systems, called pongorama.com, but it was never finished. So I incorporated this into old-computers.com. These two sections will merge very soon.

> "WE ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON A BRAND NEW VERSION WHICH WILL INCLUDE WIKI FUNCTIONS"

RG: What gives you the edge over similar websites?

OB: Well, we were the first for a start. At the time, we proposed good content along with a well-designed website that few others could match, including original features such as mini-forums, computer of the day, 3 models and stupid scans. We even proposed a way to administrate members collections online and offline. To be honest, though, our main asset is our actual content. We've managed to be motivated enough to keep putting content online for years. We are currently working on a brand new version which will include wiki functions to help people contribute to the site and will also be adding enhanced community features.

RG: What's the most popular part of the site?

OB: The museum of course! After that come the history pages which, oddly enough, are the poorest content of the website! A lot of people want to read about the history of computers, though, so we will try to constantly develop this part of the site.

RG: How can our readers contribute?

OB: They have to mail us the content so we can then integrate it into the site, which is currently taking me at least one to two hours a day. As I said, though, we are working on a brand new wikified version, so things will become far easier.

RG: Do you see yourself more as a resource site or virtual museum?

OB: More as a resource site, but Wikipedia appeared as an unfair competitor, officialising content rip-off from historical resource sites like us under cover of its worldwide wiki/open-source mission.

What's your favourite computer and why?

OB: Well, I prefer the computers I owned when I was a kid: Oric 1, Oric Atmos and ZX Spectrum. The Spectrum was a great computer and a fantastic object of design. Apart from these, I prefer obscure systems with terrible keyboards, such as the Matra-Hachette Alice, or the Mattel Aquarius!

DEEPER LOOK – WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

Old-Computers.com
www.old-computers.com

Have you heard of the Terta Tap 34? Have you ever used a BASF 7100 or tapped out some code on a PERTEC PCC 2000? If not then you may well want to take a look at the excellent Old-Computers.com. The longest running website of its kind – now 14 years and counting – it's a tremendously valuable site that features hundreds of photos of old, incredibly obscure machines, as well as fascinating facts and trivia. Along with the excellent resource material that makes up the main site, there are collection pictures from over 680 collectors and an excellent forum that's often just as valuable a resource tool as the main site to which it's attached.



RETRO MUSEUM
www.retrocomputermuseum.co.uk
This site will soon be an actual physical place you can visit.

RACKET BOY
www.racketboy.com
There's a definite Sega slant to Racket Boy, but it's a lot of fun.

RADIO SEGA
www.radiosega.net
If you're a fan of Sega music you'll love Radio Sega.

SEGA-16.COM
www.sega-16.com
Mega Drive site with some incredibly in-depth interviews.

RETRO 101
http://retro101.co.uk
It's fairly new, but Retro 101 has some informative articles.

RETRO GAMING RADIO
www.monroeworld.com
Superb monthly podcast that looks at the US game market.

RLLMUK FORUM
www.rllmukforum.com
All the latest games and a retro section with helpful members.

THE RUBBER BEERMAT
www.therubberbeermat.co.uk
Excellent Spectrum site that champions a lot of rare games.

SCOTTISH AMIGA USER GROUP
http://scottishamiga.webs.com
Newly formed site for Scottish Amiga fans.

SHOOT THE CORE
http://shootthecore.moonpod.com
This brilliant site loves shmups of all descriptions.

SHMUPS
www.shmups.com
Amazing website dedicated to the shoot-'em-up genre.

VIDEOGAME MUSEUM
www.vgmuseum.com
Screenshots, game endings, cover scans, and reviews.

THE VIRTUAL CONSOLE ARCHIVE
www.vc-reviews.com
Everything VC-related.

WORLD OF SPECTRUM
www.worldofspectrum.org
Superb Spectrum site that offers a friendly forum.

GAMESTYLE
www.gamestyle.net
Long-standing website that now includes retro articles.

If you want to add your website to our expanding directory, please contact Darran at **darran.jones@imagine-publishing.co.uk**

END/GAME



SEGA SONIC ARCADE

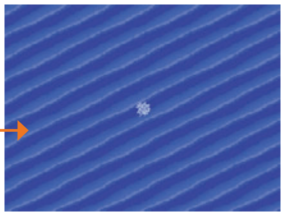
Sega Sonic Arcade marks the first arcade appearance of Sega's blue hedgehog. The game is notable for its peculiar isometric looks, trackball controls (although that solid dash-and-smash Sonic gameplay remains firmly intact) and its curious supporting cast of playable characters. Oddly, instead of Tails, who was firmly on the scene at the time of the game's release, Sonic is instead supported by a duo of fresh-faced anthropomorphic animals who oddly went on to have very little bearing on the popular platform franchise.











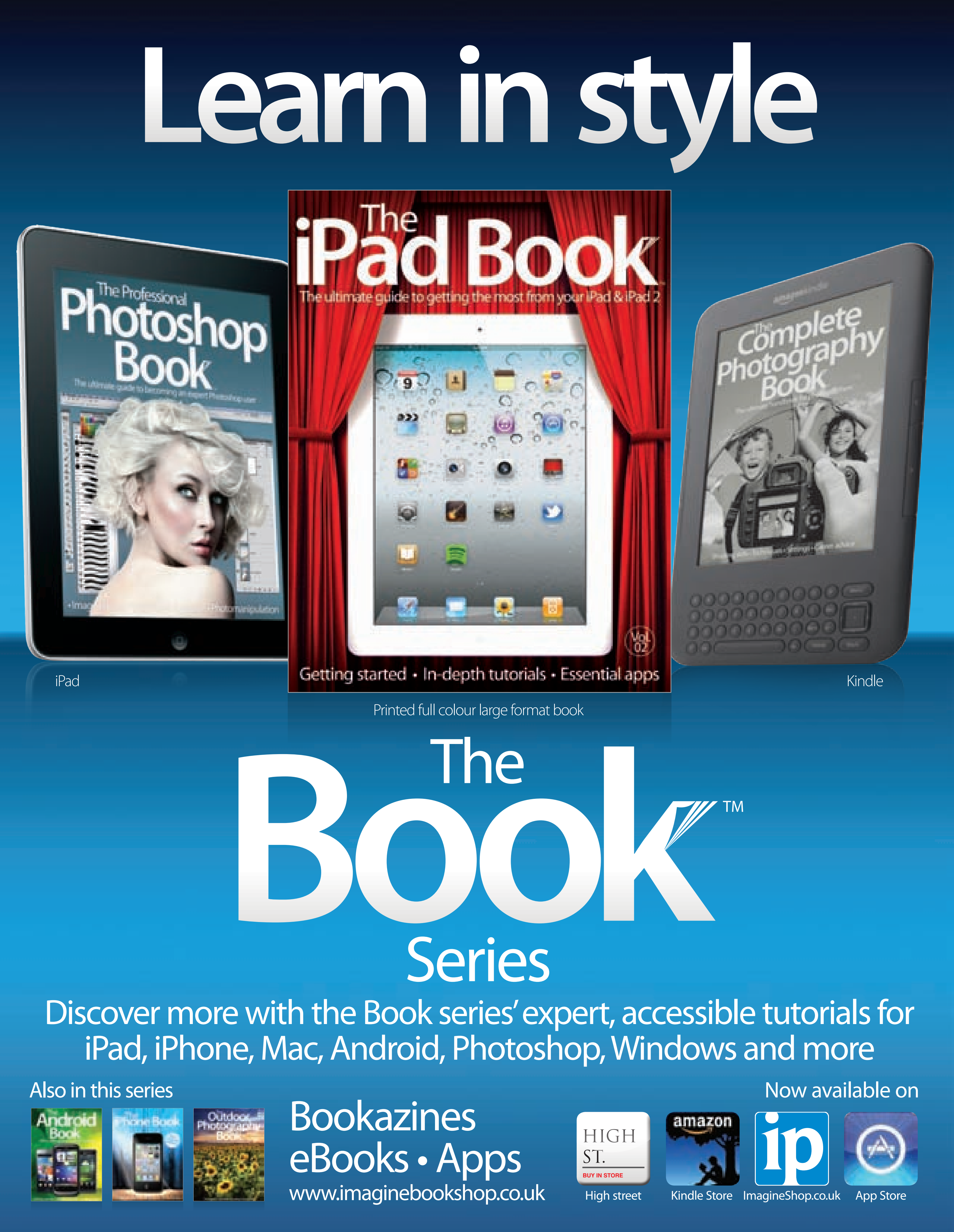
SCREEN 1
Upon reaching the evil Dr Robotnik's techno lair, it's revealed that he's holding Sonic Max and Mighty there – and that his tower is rigged to blow shortly after he presses that big self-destruct button. Could this be curtains for our heroes?

SCREEN 2
Not if there's any good left in this isometric hell-world. Go Sonic, go Max and go Mighty; get your hairy carcasses out of there fast. The commercial success of the Mega Drive rests in your laps (well, yours anyway Sonic).

SCREEN 3
Well done chaps, you made it… but with several minutes to spare, judging by the distance between you and that exploding tower far off in the distance. So what was all of that race against the clock malarkey about then?

SCREEN 4
To rub salt in, the game finishes by showing us a clip of Robotnik making a quick getaway inside his Egg-O-Matic, completely unscathed. Our tempers are fraying, Sega. And what sort of stupid name is *Sega Sonic Arcade* anyway?

SCREEN 5
Oh but wait, what's this? Robotnik's craft malfunctions in mid-air, causing him to plummet 7,000ft into the icy sea where he's quickly ripped to shreds by a school of great white sharks that were bitten by zombies. Nice recovery, Sega.


Learn in style
The Professional Photoshop Book
The iPad Book
The ultimate guide to getting the most from your iPad & iPad 2
Getting started • In-depth tutorials • Essential apps
The Complete Photography Book
iPad
Kindle
Printed full colour large format book
The Book™ Series
Discover more with the Book series' expert, accessible tutorials for iPad, iPhone, Mac, Android, Photoshop, Windows and more
Also in this series
Android Book
Outdoor Photography Book
Bookazines
eBooks • Apps
www.imaginebookshop.co.uk
Now available on
HIGH ST.
BUY IN STORE
amazon
ip
High street
Kindle Store
ImagineShop.co.uk
App Store